THE COMPLETE WORKS OF WILLIAM HAZLITT IN TWENTY-ONE VOLUMES

CENTENARY EDITION

Edited by

P. P. HOWE

VOLUME SIX

THIS EDITION IS LIMITED TO
ONE THOUSAND SETS FOR
SALE IN ENGLAND AND THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



THE COMPLETE WORKS OF

WILLIAM HAZLITT

EDITED BY P. P. HOWE

AFTER THE EDITION OF
A. R. WALLER AND ARNOLD GLOVER

VOLUME SIX

Lectures on the
English Comic
Writers *and*
Lectures on the
Age of Elizabeth

J. M. DENT AND SONS, LTD.
LONDON AND TORONTO

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN AT THE
CHAUCER PRESS, BUNGAY, SUFFOLK

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LECTURES ON THE ENGLISH COMIC WRITERS

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Published in 1819 in one 8vo. volume with the following title-page : 'Lectures on the English Comic Writers. Delivered at the Surry Institution. By William Hazlitt. "It is a very good office one man does another, when he tells him the manner of his being pleased." Steele. London : Printed for Taylor and Hessey, 93, Fleet Street. 1819.' The volume was printed by T. Miller, Noble Street, Cheapside, and does not appear to have been reprinted or reissued. The so-called 'third edition,' edited by the author's son and published by Templeman, appeared in 1841, and included some additions collected from various sources. These additions are referred to in the notes to the present volume.

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LECTURES ON THE COMIC WRITERS, Etc. OF GREAT BRITAIN

LECTURE I.—INTRODUCTORY

ON WIT AND HUMOUR

Man is the only animal that laughs and weeps; for he is the only animal that is struck with the difference between what things are, and what they ought to be. We weep at what thwarts or exceeds our desires in serious matters: we laugh at what only disappoints our expectations in trifles. We shed tears from sympathy with real and necessary distress; as we burst into laughter from want of sympathy with that which is unreasonable and unnecessary, the absurdity of which provokes our spleen or mirth, rather than any serious reflections on it.

To explain the nature of laughter and tears, is to account for the condition of human life; for it is in a manner compounded of these two! It is a tragedy or a comedy—sad or merry, as it happens. The crimes and misfortunes that are inseparable from it, shock and wound the mind when they once seize upon it, and when the pressure can no longer be borne, seek relief in tears: the follies and absurdities that men commit, or the odd accidents that befal them, afford us amusement from the very rejection of these false claims upon our sympathy, and end in laughter. If every thing that went wrong, if every vanity or weakness in another gave us a sensible pang, it would be hard indeed: but as long as the disagreeableness of the consequences of a sudden disaster is kept out of sight by the immediate oddity of the circumstances, and the absurdity or unaccountableness of a foolish action is the most striking thing in it, the ludicrous prevails over the pathetic, and we receive pleasure instead of pain from the farce of life which is played before us, and which discomposes our gravity as often as it fails to move our anger or our pity!

Tears may be considered as the natural and involuntary resource of the mind overcome by some sudden and violent emotion, before it has had time to reconcile its feelings to the change of circumstances: while laughter may be defined to be the same sort of convulsive and involuntary movement, occasioned by mere surprise or contrast (in the absence of any more serious emotion), before it has time to reconcile its belief to contradictory appearances. If we hold a mask before our face, and approach a child with this disguise on, it will at first, from the oddity and incongruity of the appearance, be inclined to laugh; if we go nearer to it, steadily, and without saying a word, it will begin to be alarmed, and be half inclined to cry: if we suddenly take off the mask, it will recover from its fears, and burst out a-laughing; but if, instead of presenting the old well-known countenance, we have concealed a satyr's head or some frightful caricature behind the first mask, the suddenness of the change will not in this case be a source of merriment to it, but will convert its surprise into an agony of consternation, and will make it scream out for help, even though it may be convinced that the whole is a trick at bottom.

The alternation of tears and laughter, in this little episode in common life, depends almost entirely on the greater or less degree of interest attached to the different changes of appearance. The mere suddenness of the transition, the mere baulking our expectations, and turning them abruptly into another channel, seems to give additional liveliness and gaiety to the animal spirits; but the instant the change is not only sudden, but threatens serious consequences, or calls up the shape of danger, terror supersedes our disposition to mirth, and laughter gives place to tears. It is usual to play with infants, and make them laugh by clapping your hands suddenly before them; but if you clap your hands too loud, or too near their sight, their countenances immediately change, and they hide them in the nurse's arms. Or suppose the same child, grown up a little older, comes to a place, expecting to meet a person it is particularly fond of, and does not find that person there, its countenance suddenly falls, its lips begin to quiver, its cheek turns pale, its eye glistens, and it vents its little sorrow (grown too big to be concealed) in a flood of tears. Again, if the child meets the same person unexpectedly after long absence, the same effect will be produced by an excess of joy, with different accompaniments; that is, the surprise and the emotion excited will make the blood come into his face, his eyes sparkle, his tongue falter or be mute, but in either case the tears will gush to his relief, and lighten the pressure about his heart. On the other hand, if a child is playing at hide-and-seek, or blindman's-buff, with persons it is ever so fond of, and either misses them where it had made sure of finding

them, or suddenly runs up against them where it had least expected it, the shock or additional impetus given to the imagination by the disappointment or the discovery, in a matter of this indifference, will only vent itself in a fit of laughter.[1] The transition here is not from one thing of importance to another, or from a state of indifference to a state of strong excitement; but merely from one impression to another that we did not at all expect, and when we had expected just the contrary. The mind having been led to form a certain conclusion, and the result producing an immediate solution of continuity in the chain of our ideas, this alternate excitement and relaxation of the imagination, the object also striking upon the mind more vividly in its loose unsettled state, and before it has had time to recover and collect itself, causes that alternate excitement and relaxation, or irregular convulsive movement of the muscular and nervous system, which constitutes physical laughter. The *discontinuous* in our sensations produces a correspondent jar and discord in the frame. The steadiness of our faith and of our features begins to give way at the same time. We turn with an incredulous smile from a story that staggers our belief: and we are ready to split our sides with laughing at an extravagance that sets all common sense and serious concern at defiance.

To understand or define the ludicrous, we must first know what the serious is. Now the serious is the habitual stress which the mind lays upon the expectation of a given order of events, following one another with a certain regularity and weight of interest attached to them. When this stress is increased beyond its usual pitch of intensity, so as to overstrain the feelings by the violent opposition of good to bad, or of objects to our desires, it becomes the pathetic or tragical. The ludicrous, or comic, is the unexpected loosening or relaxing this stress below its usual pitch of intensity, by such an abrupt transposition of the order of our ideas, as taking the mind unawares, throws it off its guard, startles it into a lively sense of pleasure, and leaves no time nor inclination for painful reflections.

The essence of the laughable then is the incongruous, the disconnecting one idea from another, or the jostling of one feeling against another. The first and most obvious cause of laughter is to be found in the simple succession of events, as in the sudden shifting of a disguise, or some unlooked-for accident, without any absurdity of character or situation. The accidental contradiction between our expectations and the event can hardly be said, however, to amount to

[1] A child that has hid itself out of the way in sport, is under a great temptation to laugh at the unconsciousness of others as to its situation. A person concealed from assassins, is in no danger of betraying his situation by laughing.

the ludicrous: it is merely laughable. The ludicrous is where there is the same contradiction between the object and our expectations, heightened by some deformity or inconvenience, that is, by its being contrary to what is customary or desirable; as the ridiculous, which is the highest degree of the laughable, is that which is contrary not only to custom but to sense and reason, or is a voluntary departure from what we have a right to expect from those who are conscious of absurdity and propriety in words, looks, and actions.

Of these different kinds or degrees of the laughable, the first is the most shallow and short-lived; for the instant the immediate surprise of a thing's merely happening one way or another is over, there is nothing to throw us back upon our former expectation, and renew our wonder at the event a second time. The second sort, that is, the ludicrous arising out of the improbable or distressing, is more deep and lasting, either because the painful catastrophe excites a greater curiosity, or because the old impression, from its habitual hold on the imagination, still recurs mechanically, so that it is longer before we can seriously make up our minds to the unaccountable deviation from it. The third sort, or the ridiculous arising out of absurdity as well as improbability, that is, where the defect or weakness is of a man's own seeking, is the most refined of all, but not always so pleasant as the last, because the same contempt and disapprobation which sharpens and subtilises our sense of the impropriety, adds a severity to it inconsistent with perfect ease and enjoyment. This last species is properly the province of satire. The principle of contrast is, however, the same in all the stages, in the simply laughable, the ludicrous, the ridiculous; and the effect is only the more complete, the more durably and pointedly this principle operates.

To give some examples in these different kinds. We laugh, when children, at the sudden removing of a pasteboard mask: we laugh, when grown up, more gravely at the tearing off the mask of deceit. We laugh at absurdity; we laugh at deformity. We laugh at a bottle-nose in a caricature; at a stuffed figure of an alderman in a pantomime, and at the tale of Slaukenbergius. A giant standing by a dwarf makes a contemptible figure enough. Rosinante and Dapple are laughable from contrast, as their masters from the same principle make two for a pair. We laugh at the dress of foreigners, and they at ours. Three chimney-sweepers meeting three Chinese in Lincoln's-inn Fields, they laughed at one another till they were ready to drop down. Country people laugh at a person because they never saw him before. Any one dressed in the height of the fashion, or quite out of it, is equally an object of ridicule. One rich source of the ludicrous is distress with which we cannot sympathise from its absurdity or

insignificance. Women laugh at their lovers. We laugh at a damned author, in spite of our teeth, and though he may be our friend. 'There is something in the misfortunes of our best friends that pleases us.' We laugh at people on the top of a stage-coach, or in it, if they seem in great extremity. It is hard to hinder children from laughing at a stammerer, at a negro, at a drunken man, or even at a madman. We laugh at mischief. We laugh at what we do not believe. We say that an argument or an assertion that is very absurd, is quite ludicrous. We laugh to shew our satisfaction with ourselves, or our contempt for those about us, or to conceal our envy or our ignorance. We laugh at fools, and at those who pretend to be wise—at extreme simplicity, awkwardness, hypocrisy, and affectation. 'They were talking of me,' says Scrub, 'for they laughed *consumedly*.' Lord Foppington's insensibility to ridicule, and airs of ineffable self-conceit, are no less admirable; and Joseph Surface's cant maxims of morality, when once disarmed of their power to do hurt, become sufficiently ludicrous.—We laugh at that in others which is a serious matter to ourselves; because our self-love is stronger than our sympathy, sooner takes the alarm, and instantly turns our heedless mirth into gravity, which only enhances the jest to others. Some one is generally sure to be the sufferer by a joke. What is sport to one, is death to another. It is only very sensible or very honest people, who laugh as freely at their own absurdities as at those of their neighbours. In general the contrary rule holds, and we only laugh at those misfortunes in which we are spectators, not sharers. The injury, the disappointment, shame, and vexation that we feel, put a stop to our mirth; while the disasters that come home to us, and excite our repugnance and dismay, are an amusing spectacle to others. The greater resistance we make, and the greater the perplexity into which we are thrown, the more lively and *piquant* is the intellectual display of cross-purposes to the by-standers. Our humiliation is their triumph. We are occupied with the disagreeableness of the result instead of its oddity or unexpectedness. Others see only the conflict of motives, and the sudden alternation of events; we feel the pain as well, which more than counterbalances the speculative entertainment we might receive from the contemplation of our abstract situation.

You cannot force people to laugh: you cannot give a reason why they should laugh: they must laugh of themselves, or not at all. As we laugh from a spontaneous impulse, we laugh the more at any restraint upon this impulse. We laugh at a thing merely because we ought not. If we think we must not laugh, this perverse impediment makes our temptation to laugh the greater; for by endeavouring to keep the obnoxious image out of sight, it comes upon us more

irresistibly and repeatedly; and the inclination to indulge our mirth, the longer it is held back, collects its force, and breaks out the more violently in peals of laughter. In like manner, any thing we must not think of makes us laugh, by its coming upon us by stealth and unawares, and from the very efforts we make to exclude it. A secret, a loose word, a wanton jest, make people laugh. Aretine laughed himself to death at hearing a lascivious story. Wickedness is often made a substitute for wit; and in most of our good old comedies, the intrigue of the plot and the double meaning of the dialogue go hand-in-hand, and keep up the ball with wonderful spirit between them. The consciousness, however it may arise, that there is something that we ought to look grave at, is almost always a signal for laughing outright: we can hardly keep our countenance at a sermon, a funeral, or a wedding. What an excellent old custom was that of throwing the stocking! What a deal of innocent mirth has been spoiled by the disuse of it!—It is not an easy matter to preserve decorum in courts of justice. The smallest circumstance that interferes with the solemnity of the proceedings, throws the whole place into an uproar of laughter. People at the point of death often say smart things. Sir Thomas More jested with his executioner. Rabelais and Wycherley both died with a *bon-mot* in their mouths.

Misunderstandings, (*malentendus*) where one person means one thing, and another is aiming at something else, are another great source of comic humour, on the same principle of ambiguity and contrast. There is a high-wrought instance of this in the dialogue between Aimwell and Gibbet, in the Beaux' Stratagem, where Aimwell mistakes his companion for an officer in a marching regiment, and Gibbet takes it for granted that the gentleman is a highwayman. The alarm and consternation occasioned by some one saying to him, in the course of common conversation, 'I apprehend you,' is the most ludicrous thing in that admirably natural and powerful performance, Mr. Emery's Robert Tyke. Again, unconsciousness in the person himself of what he is about, or of what others think of him, is also a great heightener of the sense of absurdity. It makes it come the fuller home upon us from his insensibility to it. His simplicity sets off the satire, and gives it a finer edge. It is a more extreme case still where the person is aware of being the object of ridicule, and yet seems perfectly reconciled to it as a matter of course. So wit is often the more forcible and pointed for being dry and serious, for it then seems as if the speaker himself had no intention in it, and we were the first to find it out. Irony, as a species of wit, owes its force to the same principle. In such cases it is the contrast between the appearance and the reality, the suspense of belief, and the seeming

incongruity, that gives point to the ridicule, and makes it enter the deeper when the first impression is overcome. Excessive impudence, as in the Liar; or excessive modesty, as in the hero of She Stoops to Conquer; or a mixture of the two, as in the Busy Body, are equally amusing. Lying is a species of wit and humour. To lay any thing to a person's charge from which he is perfectly free, shews spirit and invention; and the more incredible the effrontery, the greater is the joke.

There is nothing more powerfully humorous than what is called *keeping* in comic character, as we see it very finely exemplified in Sancho Panza and Don Quixote. The proverbial phlegm and the romantic gravity of these two celebrated persons may be regarded as the height of this kind of excellence. The deep feeling of character strengthens the sense of the ludicrous. Keeping in comic character is consistency in absurdity; a determined and laudable attachment to the incongruous and singular. The regularity completes the contradiction; for the number of instances of deviation from the right line, branching out in all directions, shews the inveteracy of the original bias to any extravagance or folly, the natural improbability, as it were, increasing every time with the multiplication of chances for a return to common sense, and in the end mounting up to an incredible and unaccountably ridiculous height, when we find our expectations as invariably baffled. The most curious problem of all, is this truth of absurdity to itself. That reason and good sense should be consistent, is not wonderful: but that caprice, and whim, and fantastical prejudice, should be uniform and infallible in their results, is the surprising thing. But while this characteristic clue to absurdity helps on the ridicule, it also softens and harmonises its excesses; and the ludicrous is here blended with a certain beauty and decorum, from this very truth of habit and sentiment, or from the principle of similitude in dissimilitude. The devotion to nonsense, and enthusiasm about trifles, is highly affecting as a moral lesson: it is one of the striking weaknesses and greatest happinesses of our nature. That which excites so lively and lasting an interest in itself, even though it should not be wisdom, is not despicable in the sight of reason and humanity. We cannot suppress the smile on the lip; but the tear should also stand ready to start from the eye. The history of hobby-horses is equally instructive and delightful; and after the pair I have just alluded to, My Uncle Toby's is one of the best and gentlest that 'ever lifted leg!' The inconveniences, odd accidents, falls, and bruises, to which they expose their riders, contribute their share to the amusement of the spectators; and the blows and wounds that the Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance received in his many perilous

adventures, have applied their healing influence to many a hurt mind. —In what relates to the laughable, as it arises from unforeseen accidents or self-willed scrapes, the pain, the shame, the mortification, and utter helplessness of situation, add to the joke, provided they are momentary, or overwhelming only to the imagination of the sufferer. Malvolio's punishment and apprehensions are as comic, from our knowing that they are not real, as Christopher Sly's drunken transformation and short-lived dream of happiness are for the like reason. Parson Adams's fall into the tub at the 'Squire's, or his being discovered in bed with Mrs. Slipslop, though pitiable, are laughable accidents: nor do we read with much gravity of the loss of his Æschylus, serious as it was to him at the time.—A Scotch clergyman, as he was going to church, seeing a spruce conceited mechanic who was walking before him, suddenly covered all over with dirt, either by falling into the kennel, or by some other calamity befalling him, smiled and passed on: but afterwards seeing the same person, who had stopped to refit, seated directly facing him in the gallery, with a look of perfect satisfaction and composure, as if nothing of the sort had happened to him, the idea of his late disaster and present self-complacency struck him so powerfully, that, unable to resist the impulse, he flung himself back in the pulpit, and laughed till he could laugh no longer. I remember reading a story in an odd number of the European Magazine, of an old gentleman who used to walk out every afternoon, with a gold-headed cane, in the fields opposite Baltimore House, which were then open, only with foot-paths crossing them. He was frequently accosted by a beggar with a wooden leg, to whom he gave money, which only made him more importunate. One day, when he was more troublesome than usual, a well-dressed person happening to come up, and observing how saucy the fellow was, said to the gentleman, 'Sir, if you will lend me your cane for a moment, I'll give him a good threshing for his impertinence.' The old gentleman, smiling at the proposal, handed him his cane, which the other no sooner was going to apply to the shoulders of the culprit, than he immediately whipped off his wooden leg, and scampered off with great alacrity, and his chastiser after him as hard as he could go. The faster the one ran, the faster the other followed him, brandishing the cane, to the great astonishment of the gentleman who owned it, till having fairly crossed the fields, they suddenly turned a corner, and nothing more was seen of either of them.

In the way of mischievous adventure, and a wanton exhibition of ludicrous weakness in character, nothing is superior to the comic parts of the Arabian Nights' Entertainments. To take only the set of stories of the Little Hunchback, who was choked with a bone,

and the Barber of Bagdad and his seven brothers,—there is that of the tailor who was persecuted by the miller's wife, and who, after toiling all night in the mill, got nothing for his pains:—of another who fell in love with a fine lady who pretended to return his passion, and inviting him to her house, as the preliminary condition of her favour, had his eyebrows shaved, his clothes stripped off, and being turned loose into a winding gallery, he was to follow her, and by overtaking obtain all his wishes, but, after a turn or two, stumbled on a trap-door, and fell plump into the street, to the great astonishment of the spectators and his own, shorn of his eyebrows, naked, and without a ray of hope left:—that of the castle-building pedlar, who, in kicking his wife, the supposed daughter of an emperor, kicks down his basket of glass, the brittle foundation of his ideal wealth, his good fortune, and his arrogance:—that, again, of the beggar who dined with the Barmecide, and feasted with him on the names of wines and dishes: and, last and best of all, the inimitable story of the Impertinent Barber himself, one of the seven, and worthy to be so; his pertinacious, incredible, teasing, deliberate, yet unmeaning folly, his wearing out the patience of the young gentleman whom he is sent for to shave, his preparations and his professions of speed, his taking out an astrolabe to measure the height of the sun while his razors are getting ready, his dancing the dance of Zimri and singing the song of Zamtout, his disappointing the young man of an assignation, following him to the place of rendezvous, and alarming the master of the house in his anxiety for his safety, by which his unfortunate patron loses his hand in the affray, and this is felt as an awkward accident. The danger which the same loquacious person is afterwards in, of losing his head for want of saying who he was, because he would not forfeit his character of being 'justly called the Silent,' is a consummation of the jest, though, if it had really taken place, it would have been carrying the joke too far. There are a thousand instances of the same sort in the Thousand and One Nights, which are an inexhaustible mine of comic humour and invention, and which, from the manners of the East which they describe, carry the principle of callous indifference in a jest as far as it can go. The serious and marvellous stories in that work, which have been so much admired and so greedily read, appear to me monstrous and abortive fictions, like disjointed dreams, dictated by a preternatural dread of arbitrary and despotic power, as the comic and familiar stories are rendered proportionably amusing and interesting from the same principle operating in a different direction, and producing endless uncertainty and vicissitude, and an heroic contempt for the untoward accidents and petty vexations of human life. It is the gaiety of despair, the mirth

and laughter of a respite during pleasure from death. The strongest instances of effectual and harrowing imagination, are in the story of Amine and her three sisters, whom she led by her side as a leash of hounds, and of the *goul* who nibbled grains of rice for her dinner, and preyed on human carcasses. In this condemnation of the serious parts of the Arabian Nights, I have nearly all the world, and in particular the author of the Ancient Mariner, against me, who must be allowed to be a judge of such matters, and who said, with a subtlety of philosophical conjecture which he alone possesses, 'That if I did not like them, it was because I did not dream.' On the other hand, I have Bishop Atterbury on my side, who, in a letter to Pope, fairly confesses that 'he could not read them in his old age.'

There is another source of comic humour which has been but little touched on or attended to by the critics—not the infliction of casual pain, but the pursuit of uncertain pleasure and idle gallantry. Half the business and gaiety of comedy turns upon this. Most of the adventures, difficulties, demurs, hair-breadth 'scapes, disguises, deceptions, blunders, disappointments, successes, excuses, all the dextrous manœuvres, artful inuendos, assignations, billets-doux, *double entendres*, sly allusions, and elegant flattery, have an eye to this—to the obtaining of those 'favours secret, sweet, and precious,' in which love and pleasure consist, and which when attained, and the *equivoque* is at an end, the curtain drops, and the play is over. All the attractions of a subject that can only be glanced at indirectly, that is a sort of forbidden ground to the imagination, except under severe restrictions, which are constantly broken through; all the resources it supplies for intrigue and invention; the bashfulness of the clownish lover, his looks of alarm and petrified astonishment; the foppish affectation and easy confidence of the happy man; the dress, the airs, the languor, the scorn, and indifference of the fine lady; the bustle, pertness, loquaciousness, and tricks of the chambermaid; the impudence, lies, and roguery of the valet; the match-making and unmaking; the wisdom of the wise; the sayings of the witty, the folly of the fool; 'the soldier's, scholar's, courtier's eye, tongue, sword, the glass of fashion and the mould of form,' have all a view to this. It is the closet in Blue-Beard. It is the life and soul of Wycherley, Congreve, Vanbrugh, and Farquhar's plays. It is the salt of comedy, without which it would be worthless and insipid. It makes Horner decent, and Millamant divine. It is the jest between Tattle and Miss Prue. It is the bait with which Olivia, in the Plain Dealer, plays with honest Manly. It lurks at the bottom of the catechism which Archer teaches Cherry, and which she learns by heart. It gives the finishing grace to Mrs. Amlet's confession—'Though I'm old, I'm chaste.'

Valentine and his Angelica would be nothing without it; Miss Peggy would not be worth a gallant; and Slender's 'sweet Ann Page' would be no more! 'The age of comedy would be gone, and the glory of our play-houses extinguished for ever.' Our old comedies would be invaluable, were it only for this, that they keep alive this sentiment, which still survives in all its fluttering grace and breathless palpitations on the stage.

Humour is the describing the ludicrous as it is in itself; wit is the exposing it, by comparing or contrasting it with something else. Humour is, as it were, the growth of nature and accident; wit is the product of art and fancy. Humour, as it is shewn in books, is an imitation of the natural or acquired absurdities of mankind, or of the ludicrous in accident, situation, and character: wit is the illustrating and heightening the sense of that absurdity by some sudden and unexpected likeness or opposition of one thing to another, which sets off the quality we laugh at or despise in a still more contemptible or striking point of view. Wit, as distinguished from poetry, is the imagination or fancy inverted, and so applied to given objects, as to make the little look less, the mean more light and worthless; or to divert our admiration or wean our affections from that which is lofty and impressive, instead of producing a more intense admiration and exalted passion, as poetry does. Wit may sometimes, indeed, be shewn in compliments as well as satire; as in the common epigram—

> 'Accept a miracle, instead of wit:
> See two dull lines with Stanhope's pencil writ.'

But then the mode of paying it is playful and ironical, and contradicts itself in the very act of making its own performance an humble foil to another's. Wit hovers round the borders of the light and trifling, whether in matters of pleasure or pain; for as soon as it describes the serious seriously, it ceases to be wit, and passes into a different form. Wit is, in fact, the eloquence of indifference, or an ingenious and striking exposition of those evanescent and glancing impressions of objects which affect us more from surprise or contrast to the train of our ordinary and literal preconceptions, than from anything in the objects themselves exciting our necessary sympathy or lasting hatred. The favourite employment of wit is to add littleness to littleness, and heap contempt on insignificance by all the arts of petty and incessant warfare; or if it ever affects to aggrandise, and use the language of hyperbole, it is only to betray into derision by a fatal comparison, as in the mock-heroic; or if it treats of serious passion, it must do it so as to lower the tone of intense and high-wrought sentiment, by the introduction of burlesque and familiar circumstances. To give an

instance or two. Butler, in his Hudibras, compares the change of night into day, to the change of colour in a boiled lobster.

> 'The sun had long since, in the lap
> Of Thetis, taken out his nap;
> And, like a lobster boil'd, the morn
> From black to red, began to turn:
> When Hudibras, whom thoughts and aching
> 'Twixt sleeping kept all night, and waking,
> Began to rub his drowsy eyes,
> And from his couch prepared to rise,
> Resolving to dispatch the deed
> He vow'd to do with trusty speed.'

Compare this with the following stanzas in Spenser, treating of the same subject:—

> 'By this the Northern Waggoner had set
> His seven-fold team behind the stedfast star,
> That was in Ocean waves yet never wet,
> But firm is fix'd and sendeth light from far
> To all that in the wide deep wand'ring are:
> And cheerful chanticleer with his note shrill,
> Had warned once that Phœbus' fiery car
> In haste was climbing up the eastern hill,
> Full envious that night so long his room did fill.
>
> At last the golden oriental gate
> Of greatest heaven 'gan to open fair,
> And Phœbus, fresh as bridegroom to his mate,
> Came dancing forth, shaking his dewy hair,
> And hurl'd his glist'ring beams through gloomy air:
> Which when the wakeful elf perceiv'd, straitway
> He started up and did himself prepare
> In sun-bright arms and battailous array,
> For with that pagan proud he combat will that day.'

In this last passage, every image is brought forward that can give effect to our natural impression of the beauty, the splendour, and solemn grandeur of the rising sun; pleasure and power wait on every line and word: whereas, in the other, the only memorable thing is a grotesque and ludicrous illustration of the alteration which takes place from darkness to gorgeous light, and that brought from the lowest instance, and with associations that can only disturb and perplex the imagination in its conception of the real object it describes. There cannot be a more witty, and at the same time degrading comparison,

than that in the same author, of the Bear turning round the pole-star to a bear tied to a stake:—

> 'But now a sport more formidable
> Had raked together village rabble;
> 'Twas an old way of recreating
> Which learned butchers call bear-baiting,
> A bold adventurous exercise
> With ancient heroes in high prize,
> For authors do affirm it came
> From Isthmian or Nemæan game;
> Others derive it from the Bear
> That's fixed in Northern hemisphere,
> And round about his pole does make
> A circle like a bear at stake,
> That at the chain's end wheels about
> And overturns the rabble rout.'

I need not multiply examples of this sort.—Wit or ludicrous invention produces its effect oftenest by comparison, but not always. It frequently effects its purposes by unexpected and subtle distinctions. For instance, in the first kind, Mr. Sheridan's description of Mr. Addington's administration as the fag-end of Mr. Pitt's, who had remained so long on the treasury bench that, like Nicias in the fable, 'he left the sitting part of the man behind him,' is as fine an example of metaphorical wit as any on record. The same idea seems, however, to have been included in the old well-known nickname of the *Rump* Parliament. Almost as happy an instance of the other kind of wit, which consists in sudden retorts, in turns upon an idea, and diverting the train of your adversary's argument abruptly and adroitly into another channel, may be seen in the sarcastic reply of Porson, who hearing some one observe that 'certain modern poets would be read and admired when Homer and Virgil were forgotten,' made answer—'And not till then!' Sir Robert Walpole's definition of the gratitude of place-expectants, 'That it is a lively sense of *future* favours,' is no doubt wit, but it does not consist in the finding out any coincidence or likeness, but in suddenly transposing the order of time in the common account of this feeling, so as to make the professions of those who pretend to it correspond more with their practice. It is filling up a blank in the human heart with a word that explains its hollowness at once. Voltaire's saying, in answer to a stranger who was observing how tall his trees grew—'That they had nothing else to do'—was a quaint mixture of wit and humour, making it out as if they really led a lazy, laborious life; but there was here neither allusion or metaphor. Again, that master-stroke in Hudibras is

sterling wit and profound satire, where speaking of certain religious hypocrites he says, that they

'Compound for sins they are inclin'd to,
By damning those they have no mind to;

but the wit consists in the truth of the character, and in the happy exposure of the ludicrous contradiction between the pretext and the practice; between their lenity towards their own vices, and their severity to those of others. The same principle of nice distinction must be allowed to prevail in those lines of the same author, where he is professing to expound the dreams of judicial astrology.

'There's but the twinkling of a star
Betwixt a man of peace and war,
A thief and justice, fool and knave,
A huffing officer and a slave;
A crafty lawyer and pickpocket;
A great philosopher and a blockhead;
A formal preacher and a player;
A learn'd physician and man slayer.'

The finest piece of wit I know of, is in the lines of Pope on the Lord Mayor's show—

'Now night descending, the proud scene is o'er,
But lives in Settle's numbers one day more.'

This is certainly as mortifying an inversion of the idea of poetical immortality as could be thought of; it fixes the *maximum* of littleness and insignificance: but it is not by likeness to any thing else that it does this, but by literally taking the lowest possible duration of ephemeral reputation, marking it (as with a slider) on the scale of endless renown, and giving a rival credit for it as his loftiest praise. In a word, the shrewd separation or disentangling of ideas that seem the same, or where the secret contradiction is not sufficiently suspected, and is of a ludicrous and whimsical nature, is wit just as much as the bringing together those that appear at first sight totally different. There is then no sufficient ground for admitting Mr. Locke's celebrated definition of wit, which he makes to consist in the finding out striking and unexpected resemblances in things so as to make pleasant pictures in the fancy, while judgment and reason, according to him, lie the clean contrary way, in separating and nicely distinguishing those wherein the smallest difference is to be found [1]

[1] His words are—'If in having our ideas in the memory ready at hand consists quickness of parts, in this of having them unconfused, and being able nicely to

On this definition Harris, the author of Hermes, has very well observed that the demonstrating the equality of the three angles of a right-angled triangle to two right ones, would, upon the principle here stated, be a piece of wit instead of an act of the judgment, or understanding, and Euclid's Elements a collection of epigrams. On the contrary it has appeared, that the detection and exposure of difference, particularly where this implies nice and subtle observation, as in discriminating between pretence and practice, between appearance and reality, is common to wit and satire with judgment and reasoning, and certainly the comparing and connecting our ideas together is an essential part of reason and judgment, as well as of wit and fancy.—Mere wit, as opposed to reason or argument, consists in striking out some casual and partial coincidence which has nothing to do, or at least implies no necessary connection with the nature of the things, which are forced into a seeming analogy by a play upon words, or some irrelevant conceit, as in puns, riddles, alliteration, &c. The jest, in all such cases, lies in the sort of mock-identity, or nominal resemblance, established by the intervention of the same words expressing different ideas, and countenancing as it were, by a fatality of language, the mischievous insinuation which the person who has

distinguish one thing from another, where there is but the least difference, consists in a great measure the exactness of judgment and clearness of reason, which is to be observed in one man above another. And hence, perhaps, may be given some reason of that common observation, that men who have a great deal of wit and prompt memories, have not always the clearest judgment or deepest reason. For wit lying mostly in the assemblage of ideas, and putting them together with quickness and variety, wherein can be found any resemblance or congruity, thereby to make up pleasant pictures and agreeable visions in the fancy; judgment, on the contrary, lies quite on the other side, in separating carefully one from another, ideas wherein can be found the least difference, thereby to avoid being misled by similitude, and by affinity to take one thing for another.' (*Essay*, vol. i. p. 143.) This definition, such as it is, Mr. Locke took without acknowledgment from Hobbes, who says in his Leviathan, 'This difference of quickness in imagining is caused by the difference of men's passions, that love and dislike some one thing, some another, and therefore some men's thoughts run one way, some another, and are held to and observe differently the things that pass through their imagination. And whereas in this succession of thoughts there is nothing to observe in the things they think on, but either in what they be like one another, or in what they be unlike, those that observe their similitudes, in case they be such as are but rarely observed by others, are said to have a good wit, by which is meant on this occasion a good fancy. But they that observe their differences and dissimilitudes, which is called distinguishing and discerning and judging between thing and thing; in case such discerning be not easy, are said to have a good judgment; and particularly in matter of conversation and business, wherein times, places, and persons are to be discerned, this virtue is called discretion. The former, that is, fancy, without the help of judgment, is not commended for a virtue; but the latter, which is judgment or discretion, is commended for itself, without the help of fancy.' *Leviathan*, p. 32.

the wit to take advantage of it wishes to convey. So when the disaffected French wits applied to the new order of the *Fleur du lys* the *double entendre* of *Compagnons d'Ulysse*, or companions of Ulysses, meaning the animal into which the fellow-travellers of the hero of the Odyssey were transformed, this was a shrewd and biting intimation of a galling truth (if truth it were) by a fortuitous concourse of letters of the alphabet, jumping in 'a foregone conclusion,' but there was no proof of the thing, unless it was self-evident. And, indeed, this may be considered as the best defence of the contested maxim—*That ridicule is the test of truth*; viz. that it does not contain or attempt a formal proof of it, but owes its power of conviction to the bare suggestion of it, so that if the thing when once hinted is not clear in itself, the satire fails of its effect and falls to the ground. The sarcasm here glanced at the character of the new or old French noblesse may not be well founded; but it is so like truth, and 'comes in such a questionable shape,' backed with the appearance of an identical proposition, that it would require a long train of facts and laboured arguments to do away the impression, even if we were sure of the honesty and wisdom of the person who undertook to refute it. A flippant jest is as good a test of truth as a solid bribe; and there are serious sophistries,

'Soul-killing lies, and truths that work small good,'

as well as idle pleasantries. Of this we may be sure, that ridicule fastens on the vulnerable points of a cause, and finds out the weak sides of an argument; if those who resort to it sometimes rely too much on its success, those who are chiefly annoyed by it almost always are so with reason, and cannot be too much on their guard against deserving it. Before we can laugh at a thing, its absurdity must at least be open and palpable to common apprehension. Ridicule is necessarily built on certain supposed facts, whether true or false, and on their inconsistency with certain acknowledged maxims, whether right or wrong. It is, therefore, a fair test, if not of philosophical or abstract truth, at least of what is truth according to public opinion and common sense; for it can only expose to instantaneous contempt that which is condemned by public opinion, and is hostile to the common sense of mankind. Or to put it differently, it is the test of the quantity of truth that there is in our favourite prejudices.—To shew how nearly allied wit is thought to be to truth, it is not unusual to say of any person—'Such a one is a man of sense, for though he said nothing, he laughed in the right place.'—Alliteration comes in here under the head of a certain sort of verbal wit; or, by pointing the expression, sometimes points the sense. Mr. Grattan's wit or

eloquence (I don't know by what name to call it) would be nothing without this accompaniment. Speaking of some ministers whom he did not like, he said, 'Their only means of government are the guinea and the gallows.' There can scarcely, it must be confessed, be a more effectual mode of political conversion than one of these applied to a man's friends, and the other to himself. The fine sarcasm of Junius on the effect of the supposed ingratitude of the Duke of Grafton at court—'The instance might be painful, but the principle would please'—notwithstanding the profound insight into human nature it implies, would hardly pass for wit without the alliteration, as some poetry would hardly be acknowledged as such without the rhyme to clench it. A quotation or a hackneyed phrase dextrously turned or wrested to another purpose, has often the effect of the liveliest wit. An idle fellow who had only fourpence left in the world, which had been put by to pay for the baking some meat for his dinner, went and laid it out to buy a new string for a guitar. An old acquaintance on hearing this story, repeated those lines out of the Allegro—

'And ever against *eating* cares
Lap me in soft Lydian airs.'

The reply of the author of the periodical paper called the World to a lady at church, who seeing him look thoughtful, asked what he was thinking of—'The next World,'—is a perversion of an established formula of language, something of the same kind.—Rhymes are sometimes a species of wit, where there is an alternate combination and resolution or decomposition of the elements of sound, contrary to our usual division and classification of them in ordinary speech, not unlike the sudden separation and re-union of the component parts of the machinery in a pantomime. The author who excels infinitely the most in this way is the writer of Hudibras. He also excels in the invention of single words and names which have the effect of wit by sounding big, and meaning nothing:—'full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.' But of the artifices of this author's burlesque style I shall have occasion to speak hereafter.—It is not always easy to distinguish between the wit of words and that of things. 'For thin partitions do their bounds divide.' Some of the late Mr. Curran's *bon mots* or *jeux d'esprit*, might be said to owe their birth to this sort of equivocal generation; or were a happy mixture of verbal wit and a lively and picturesque fancy, of legal acuteness in detecting the variable application of words, and of a mind apt at perceiving the ludicrous in external objects. 'Do you see any thing ridiculous in this wig?' said one of his brother judges to him. 'Nothing but the

head,' was the answer. Now here instantaneous advantage was taken of the slight technical ambiguity in the construction of language, and the matter-of-fact is flung into the scale as a thumping makeweight. After all, verbal and accidental strokes of wit, though the most surprising and laughable, are not the best and most lasting. That wit is the most refined and effectual, which is founded on the detection of unexpected likeness or distinction in things, rather than in words. It is more severe and galling, that is, it is more unpardonable though less surprising, in proportion as the thought suggested is more complete and satisfactory, from its being inherent in the nature of the things themselves. *Hæret lateri lethalis arundo.* Truth makes the greatest libel; and it is that which barbs the darts of wit. The Duke of Buckingham's saying, 'Laws are not, like women, the worse for being old,' is an instance of a harmless truism and the utmost malice of wit united. This is, perhaps, what has been meant by the distinction between true and false wit. Mr. Addison, indeed, goes so far as to make it the exclusive test of true wit that it will bear translation into another language, that is to say, that it does not depend at all on the form of expression. But this is by no means the case. Swift would hardly have allowed of such a strait-laced theory, to make havoc with his darling conundrums; though there is no one whose serious wit is more that of things, as opposed to a mere play either of words or fancy. I ought, I believe, to have noticed before, in speaking of the difference between wit and humour, that wit is often pretended absurdity, where the person overacts or exaggerates a certain part with a conscious design to expose it as if it were another person, as when Mandrake in the Twin Rivals says, 'This glass is too big, carry it away, I'll drink out of the bottle.' On the contrary, when Sir Hugh Evans says very innocently, ''Od's plessed will, I will not be absence at the grace,' though there is here a great deal of humour, there is no wit. This kind of wit of the humorist, where the person makes a butt of himself, and exhibits his own absurdities or foibles purposely in the most pointed and glaring lights, runs through the whole of the character of Falstaff, and is, in truth, the principle on which it is founded. It is an irony directed against one's-self. Wit is, in fact, a voluntary act of the mind, or exercise of the invention, shewing the absurd and ludicrous consciously, whether in ourselves or another. Cross-readings, where the blunders are designed, are wit: but if any one were to light upon them through ignorance or accident, they would be merely ludicrous.

It might be made an argument of the intrinsic superiority of poetry or imagination to wit, that the former does not admit of mere verbal combinations. Whenever they do occur, they are uniformly

blemishes. It requires something more solid and substantial to raise admiration or passion. The general forms and aggregate masses of our ideas must be brought more into play, to give weight and magnitude. Imagination may be said to be the finding out something similar in things generally alike, or with like feelings attached to them; while wit principally aims at finding out something that seems the same, or amounts to a momentary deception where you least expected it, viz. in things totally opposite. The reason why more slight and partial, or merely accidental and nominal resemblances serve the purposes of wit, and indeed characterise its essence as a distinct operation and faculty of the mind, is, that the object of ludicrous poetry is naturally to let down and lessen; and it is easier to let down than to raise up, to weaken than to strengthen, to disconnect our sympathy from passion and power, than to attach and rivet it to any object of grandeur or interest, to startle and shock our preconceptions by incongruous and equivocal combinations, than to confirm, enforce, and expand them by powerful and lasting associations of ideas, or striking and true analogies. A slight cause is sufficient to produce a slight effect. To be indifferent or sceptical, requires no effort; to be enthusiastic and in earnest, requires a strong impulse, and collective power. Wit and humour (comparatively speaking, or taking the extremes to judge of the gradations by) appeal to our indolence, our vanity, our weakness, and insensibility; serious and impassioned poetry appeals to our strength, our magnanimity, our virtue, and humanity. Any thing is sufficient to heap contempt upon an object; even the bare suggestion of a mischievous allusion to what is improper, dissolves the whole charm, and puts an end to our admiration of the sublime or beautiful. Reading the finest passage in Milton's Paradise Lost in a false tone, will make it seem insipid and absurd. The cavilling at, or invidiously pointing out, a few slips of the pen, will embitter the pleasure, or alter our opinion of a whole work, and make us throw it down in disgust. The critics are aware of this vice and infirmity in our nature, and play upon it with periodical success. The meanest weapons are strong enough for this kind of warfare, and the meanest hands can wield them. Spleen can subsist on any kind of food. The shadow of a doubt, the hint of an inconsistency, a word, a look, a syllable, will destroy our best-formed convictions. What puts this argument in as striking a point of view as any thing, is the nature of parody or burlesque, the secret of which lies merely in transposing or applying at a venture to any thing, or to the lowest objects, that which is applicable only to certain given things, or to the highest matters. 'From the sublime to the ridiculous, there is but one step.' The slightest want of unity of

impression destroys the sublime; the detection of the smallest incongruity is an infallible ground to rest the ludicrous upon. But in serious poetry, which aims at rivetting our affections, every blow must tell home. The missing a single time is fatal, and undoes the spell. We see how difficult it is to sustain a continued flight of impressive sentiment: how easy it must be then to travestie or burlesque it, to flounder into nonsense, and be witty by playing the fool. It is a common mistake, however, to suppose that parodies degrade, or imply a stigma on the subject: on the contrary, they in general imply something serious or sacred in the originals. Without this, they would be good for nothing; for the immediate contrast would be wanting, and with this they are sure to tell. The best parodies are, accordingly, the best and most striking things reversed. Witness the common travesties of Homer and Virgil. Mr. Canning's court parodies on Mr. Southey's popular odes, are also an instance in point (I do not know which were the cleverest); and the best of the Rejected Addresses is the parody on Crabbe, though I do not certainly think that Crabbe is the most ridiculous poet now living.

Lear and the Fool are the sublimest instance I know of passion and wit united, or of imagination unfolding the most tremendous sufferings, and of burlesque on passion playing with it, aiding and relieving its intensity by the most pointed, but familiar and indifferent illustrations of the same thing in different objects, and on a meaner scale. The Fool's reproaching Lear with 'making his daughters his mothers,' his snatches of proverbs and old ballads, 'The hedge-sparrow fed the cuckoo so long, that it had its head bit off by its young,' and 'Whoop jug, I know when the horse follows the cart,' are a running commentary of trite truisms, pointing out the extreme folly of the infatuated old monarch, and in a manner reconciling us to its inevitable consequences.

Lastly, there is a wit of sense and observation, which consists in the acute illustration of good sense and practical wisdom, by means of some far-fetched conceit or quaint imagery. The matter is sense, but the form is wit. Thus the lines in Pope—

> ''Tis with our judgments as our watches, none
> Go just alike; yet each believes his own——'

are witty, rather than poetical; because the truth they convey is a mere dry observation on human life, without elevation or enthusiasm, and the illustration of it is of that quaint and familiar kind that is merely curious and fanciful. Cowley is an instance of the same kind in almost all his writings. Many of the jests and witticisms in the best comedies are moral aphorisms and rules for the conduct of life,

sparkling with wit and fancy in the mode of expression. The ancient philosophers also abounded in the same kind of wit, in telling home truths in the most unexpected manner.—In this sense Æsop was the greatest wit and moralist that ever lived. Ape and slave, he looked askance at human nature, and beheld its weaknesses and errors transferred to another species. Vice and virtue were to him as plain as any objects of sense. He saw in man a talking, absurd, obstinate, proud, angry animal; and clothed these abstractions with wings, or a beak, or tail, or claws, or long ears, as they appeared embodied in these hieroglyphics in the brute creation. His moral philosophy is natural history. He makes an ass bray wisdom, and a frog croak humanity. The store of moral truth, and the fund of invention in exhibiting it in eternal forms, palpable and intelligible, and delightful to children and grown persons, and to all ages and nations, are almost miraculous. The invention of a fable is to me the most enviable exertion of human genius: it is the discovering a truth to which there is no clue, and which, when once found out, can never be forgotten. I would rather have been the author of Æsop's Fables, than of Euclid's Elements!—That popular entertainment, Punch and the Puppet-show, owes part of its irresistible and universal attraction to nearly the same principle of inspiring inanimate and mechanical agents with sense and consciousness. The drollery and wit of a piece of wood is doubly droll and farcical. Punch is not merry in himself, but 'he is the cause of heartfelt mirth in other men.' The wires and pulleys that govern his motions are conductors to carry off the spleen, and all 'that perilous stuff that weighs upon the heart.' If we see a number of people turning the corner of a street, ready to burst with secret satisfaction, and with their faces bathed in laughter, we know what is the matter—that they are just come from a puppet-show. Who can see three little painted, patched-up figures, no bigger than one's thumb, strut, squeak and gibber, sing, dance, chatter, scold, knock one another about the head, give themselves airs of importance, and 'imitate humanity most abominably,' without laughing immoderately? We overlook the farce and mummery of human life in little, and for nothing; and what is still better, it costs them who have to play in it nothing. We place the mirth, and glee, and triumph, to our own account; and we know that the bangs and blows they have received go for nothing, as soon as the showman puts them up in his box and marches off quietly with them, as jugglers of a less amusing description sometimes march off with the wrongs and rights of mankind in their pockets!—I have heard no bad judge of such matters say, that 'he liked a comedy better than a tragedy, a farce better than a comedy, a pantomime better than a farce, but a puppet-show best of all.' I look upon it,

that he who invented puppet-shows was a greater benefactor to his species, than he who invented Operas!

I shall conclude this imperfect and desultory sketch of wit and humour with Barrow's celebrated description of the same subject. He says, '—But first it may be demanded, what the thing we speak of is, or what this facetiousness doth import; to which question I might reply, as Democritus did to him that asked the definition of a man—*'tis that which we all see and know;* and one better apprehends what it is by acquaintance, than I can inform him by description. It is, indeed, a thing so versatile and multiform, appearing in so many shapes, so many postures, so many garbs, so variously apprehended by several eyes and judgments, that it seemeth no less hard to settle a clear and certain notice thereof, than to make a portrait of Proteus, or to define the figure of fleeting air. Sometimes it lieth in pat allusion to a known story, or in seasonable application of a trivial saying, or in forging an apposite tale: sometimes it playeth in words and phrases, taking advantage from the ambiguity of their sense, or the affinity of their sound: sometimes it is wrapped in a dress of luminous expression; sometimes it lurketh under an odd similitude. Sometimes it is lodged in a sly question, in a smart answer; in a quirkish reason; in a shrewd intimation; in cunningly diverting or cleverly restoring an objection: sometimes it is couched in a bold scheme of speech; in a tart irony; in a lusty hyperbole; in a startling metaphor; in a plausible reconciling of contradictions, or in acute nonsense: sometimes a scenical representation of persons or things, a counterfeit speech, a mimical look or gesture passeth for it; sometimes an affected simplicity, sometimes a presumptuous bluntness giveth it being: sometimes it riseth only from a lucky hitting upon what is strange: sometimes from a crafty wresting obvious matter to the purpose: often it consisteth in one knows not what, and springeth up one can hardly tell how. Its ways are unaccountable and inexplicable, being answerable to the numberless rovings of fancy and windings of language. It is, in short, a manner of speaking out of the simple and plain way (such as reason teacheth and knoweth things by), which by a pretty surprising uncouthness in conceit or expression doth affect and amuse the fancy, shewing in it some wonder, and breathing some delight thereto. It raiseth admiration, as signifying a nimble sagacity of apprehension, a special felicity of invention, a vivacity of spirit, and reach of wit more than vulgar: it seeming to argue a rare quickness of parts, that one can fetch in remote conceits applicable; a notable skill that he can dextrously accommodate them to a purpose before him, together with a lively briskness of humour, not apt to damp those sportful flashes of

imagination. (Whence in Aristotle such persons are termed ἐπιδέξιοι, dexterous men and εὔτροποι, men of facile or versatile manners, who can easily turn themselves to all things, or turn all things to themselves.) It also procureth delight by gratifying curiosity with its rareness or semblance of difficulty (as monsters, not for their beauty but their rarity; as juggling tricks, not for their use but their abstruseness, are beheld with pleasure;) by diverting the mind from its road of serious thoughts; by instilling gaiety and airiness of spirit; by provoking to such dispositions of spirit, in way of emulation or complaisance, and by seasoning matter, otherwise distasteful or insipid, with an unusual and thence grateful tang.'—*Barrow's Works, Serm.* 14.

I will only add by way of general caution, that there is nothing more ridiculous than laughter without a cause, nor any thing more troublesome than what are called laughing people. A professed laugher is as contemptible and tiresome a character as a professed wit: the one is always contriving something to laugh at, the other is always laughing at nothing. An excess of levity is as impertinent as an excess of gravity. A character of this sort is well personified by Spenser, in the Damsel of the Idle Lake—

> '————Who did essay
> To laugh at shaking of the leavés light.'

Any one must be mainly ignorant or thoughtless, who is surprised at every thing he sees; or wonderfully conceited, who expects every thing to conform to his standard of propriety. Clowns and idiots laugh on all occasions; and the common failing of wishing to be thought satirical often runs through whole families in country places, to the great annoyance of their neighbours. To be struck with incongruity in whatever comes before us, does not argue great comprehension or refinement of perception, but rather a looseness and flippancy of mind and temper, which prevents the individual from connecting any two ideas steadily or consistently together. It is owing to a natural crudity and precipitateness of the imagination, which assimilates nothing properly to itself. People who are always laughing, at length laugh on the wrong side of their faces; for they cannot get others to laugh with them. In like manner, an affectation of wit by degrees hardens the heart, and spoils good company and good manners. A perpetual succession of good things puts an end to common conversation. There is no answer to a jest, but another; and even where the ball can be kept up in this way without ceasing, it tires the patience of the by-standers, and runs the speakers out of breath. Wit is the salt of conversation, not the food.

The four chief names for comic humour out of our own language

are Aristophanes and Lucian among the ancients, Moliere and Rabelais among the moderns. Of the two first I shall say, for I know but little. I should have liked Aristophanes better, if he had treated Socrates less scurvily, for he has treated him most scurvily both as to wit and argument. His Plutus and his Birds are striking instances, the one of dry humour, the other of airy fancy.—Lucian is a writer who appears to deserve his full fame: he has the licentious and extravagant wit of Rabelais, but directed more uniformly to a purpose; and his comic productions are interspersed with beautiful and eloquent descriptions, full of sentiment, such as the exquisite account of the fable of the halcyon put into the mouth of Socrates, and the heroic eulogy on Bacchus, which is conceived in the highest strain of glowing panegyric.

The two other authors I proposed to mention are modern, and French. Moliere, however, in the spirit of his writings, is almost as much an English as a French author—quite a *barbare* in all in which he really excelled. He was unquestionably one of the greatest comic geniuses that ever lived; a man of infinite wit, gaiety, and invention—full of life, laughter, and whim. But it cannot be denied, that his plays are in general mere farces, without scrupulous adherence to nature, refinement of character, or common probability. The plots of several of them could not be carried on for a moment without a perfect collusion between the parties to wink at contradictions, and act in defiance of the evidence of their senses. For instance, take the *Medecin malgrè lui* (the Mock Doctor), in which a common wood-cutter takes upon himself, and is made successfully to support through a whole play, the character of a learned physician, without exciting the least suspicion; and yet, notwithstanding the absurdity of the plot, it is one of the most laughable and truly comic productions that can well be imagined. The rest of his lighter pieces, the *Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, *Monsieur Pourceaugnac*, *George Dandin*, (or Barnaby Brittle,) &c. are of the same description—gratuitous assumptions of character, and fanciful and outrageous caricatures of nature. He indulges at his peril in the utmost license of burlesque exaggeration; and gives a loose to the intoxication of his animal spirits. With respect to his two most laboured comedies, the Tartuffe and Misanthrope, I confess that I find them rather hard to get through: they have much of the improbability and extravagance of the others, united with the endless common-place prosing of French declamation. What can exceed, for example, the absurdity of the Misanthrope, who leaves his mistress, after every proof of her attachment and constancy, for no other reason than that she will not submit to the *technical formality* of going to live with him in a wilderness? The

characters, again, which Celimene gives of her female friends, near the opening of the play, are admirable satires, (as good as Pope's characters of women,) but not exactly in the spirit of comic dialogue. The strictures of Rousseau on this play, in his Letter to D'Alembert, are a fine specimen of the best philosophical criticism.—The same remarks apply in a greater degree to the Tartuffe. The long speeches and reasonings in this play tire one almost to death: they may be very good logic, or rhetoric, or philosophy, or any thing but comedy. If each of the parties had retained a special pleader to speak his sentiments, they could have appeared more verbose or intricate. The improbability of the character of Orgon is wonderful. This play is in one point of view invaluable, as a lasting monument of the credulity of the French to all verbal professions of wisdom or virtue; and its existence can only be accounted for from that astonishing and tyrannical predominance which words exercise over things in the mind of every Frenchman. The *Ecole des Femmes*, from which Wycherley has borrowed his Country Wife, with the true spirit of original genius, is, in my judgment, the masterpiece of Moliere. The set speeches in the original play, it is true, would not be borne on the English stage, nor indeed on the French, but that they are carried off by the verse. The *Critique de l'Ecole des Femmes*, the dialogue of which is prose, is written in a very different style. Among other things, this little piece contains an exquisite, and almost unanswerable defence of the superiority of comedy over tragedy. Moliere was to be excused for taking this side of the question.

A writer of some pretensions among ourselves has reproached the French with 'an equal want of books and men.' There is a common French print, in which Moliere is represented reading one of his plays in the presence of the celebrated Ninon de l'Enclos, to a circle of the wits and first men of his own time. Among these are the great Corneille; the tender, faultless Racine; Fontaine, the artless old man, unconscious of immortality; the accomplished St. Evremond; the Duke de la Rochefocault, the severe anatomiser of the human breast; Boileau, the flatterer of courts and judge of men! Were these men nothing? They have passed for men (and great ones) hitherto, and though the prejudice is an old one, I should hope it may still last our time.

Rabelais is another name that might have saved this unjust censure. The wise sayings and heroic deeds of Gargantua and Pantagruel ought not to be set down as nothing. I have already spoken my mind at large of this author; but I cannot help thinking of him here, sitting in his easy chair, with an eye languid with excess of mirth,

his lip quivering with a new-born conceit, and wiping his beard after a well-seasoned jest, with his pen held carelessly in his hand, his wine-flagons, and his books of law, of school divinity, and physic before him, which were his jest-books, whence he drew endless stores of absurdity; laughing at the world and enjoying it by turns, and making the world laugh with him again, for the last three hundred years, at his teeming wit and its own prolific follies. Even to those who have never read his works, the name of Rabelais is a cordial to the spirits, and the mention of it cannot consist with gravity or spleen!

LECTURE II

ON SHAKSPEARE AND BEN JONSON

Dr. Johnson thought Shakspeare's comedies better than his tragedies, and gives as a reason, that he was more at home in the one than in the other. That comedies should be written in a more easy and careless vein than tragedies, is but natural. This is only saying that a comedy is not so serious a thing as a tragedy. But that he shewed a greater mastery in the one than the other, I cannot allow, nor is it generally felt. The labour which the Doctor thought it cost Shakspeare to write his tragedies, only shewed the labour which it cost the critic in reading them, that is, his general indisposition to sympathise heartily and spontaneously with works of high-wrought passion or imagination. There is not in any part of this author's writings the slightest trace of his having ever been 'smit with the love of sacred song,' except some passages in Pope. His habitually morbid temperament and saturnine turn of thought required that the string should rather be relaxed than tightened, that the weight upon the mind should rather be taken off than have any thing added to it. There was a sluggish moroseness about his moral constitution that refused to be roused to any keen agony of thought, and that was not very safely to be trifled with in lighter matters, though this last was allowed to pass off as the most pardonable offence against the gravity of his pretensions. It is in fact the established rule at present, in these cases, to speak highly of the Doctor's authority, and to dissent from almost every one of his critical decisions. For my own part, I so far consider this preference given to the comic genius of the poet as erroneous and unfounded, that I should say that he is the only tragic poet in the world in the highest sense, as being on a par with, and the same as Nature, in her greatest heights and depths of

action and suffering. There is but one who durst walk within that mighty circle, treading the utmost bound of nature and passion, shewing us the dread abyss of woe in all its ghastly shapes and colours, and laying open all the faculties of the human soul to act, to think, and suffer, in direst extremities; whereas I think, on the other hand, that in comedy, though his talents there too were as wonderful as they were delightful, yet that there were some before him, others on a level with him, and many close behind him. I cannot help thinking, for instance, that Moliere was as great, or a greater comic genius than Shakspeare, though assuredly I do not think that Racine was as great, or a greater tragic genius. I think that both Rabelais and Cervantes, the one in the power of ludicrous description, the other in the invention and perfect keeping of comic character, excelled Shakspeare; that is, they would have been greater men, if they had had equal power with him over the stronger passions. For my own reading, I like Vanbrugh's City Wives' Confederacy as well, or ('not to speak it profanely') better than the Merry Wives of Windsor, and Congreve's Way of the World as well as the Comedy of Errors or Love's Labour Lost. But I cannot say that I know of any tragedies in the world that make even a tolerable approach to Hamlet, or Lear, or Othello, or some others, either in the sum total of their effect, or in their complete distinctness from every thing else, by which they take not only unquestioned, but undivided possession of the mind, and form a class, a world by themselves, mingling with all our thoughts like a second being. Other tragedies tell for more or less, are good, bad, or indifferent, as they have more or less excellence of a kind common to them with others: but these stand alone by themselves; they have nothing common-place in them; they are a new power in the imagination, they tell for their whole amount, they measure from the ground. There is not only nothing so good (in my judgment) as Hamlet, or Lear, or Othello, or Macbeth, but there is nothing like Hamlet, or Lear, or Othello, or Macbeth. There is nothing, I believe, in the majestic Corneille, equal to the stern pride of Coriolanus, or which gives such an idea of the crumbling in pieces of the Roman grandeur, 'like an unsubstantial pageant faded,' as the Antony and Cleopatra. But to match the best serious comedies, such as Moliere's Misanthrope and his Tartuffe, we must go to Shakspeare's tragic characters, the Timon of Athens or honest Iago, when we shall more than succeed. He put his strength into his tragedies, and played with comedy. He was greatest in what was greatest; and his *forte* was not trifling, according to the opinion here combated, even though he might do that as well as any body else, unless he could do it better than any

body else.—I would not be understood to say that there are not scenes or whole characters in Shakspeare equal in wit and drollery to any thing upon record. Falstaff alone is an instance which, if I would, I could not get over. 'He is the leviathan of all the creatures of the author's comic genius, and tumbles about his unwieldy bulk in an ocean of wit and humour.' But in general it will be found (if I am not mistaken) that even in the very best of these, the spirit of humanity and the fancy of the poet greatly prevail over the mere wit and satire, and that we sympathise with his characters oftener than we laugh at them. His ridicule wants the sting of ill-nature. He had hardly such a thing as spleen in his composition. Falstaff himself is so great a joke, rather from his being so huge a mass of enjoyment than of absurdity. His re-appearance in the Merry Wives of Windsor is not 'a consummation devoutly to be wished,' for we do not take pleasure in the repeated triumphs over him.—Mercutio's quips and banter upon his friends shew amazing gaiety, frankness, and volubility of tongue, but we think no more of them when the poet takes the words out of his mouth, and gives the description of Queen Mab. Touchstone, again, is a shrewd biting fellow, a lively mischievous wag: but still what are his gibing sentences and chopped logic to the fine moralising vein of the fantastical Jacques, stretched beneath 'the shade of melancholy boughs?' Nothing. That is, Shakspeare was a greater poet than wit: his imagination was the leading and master-quality of his mind, which was always ready to soar into its native element: the ludicrous was only secondary and subordinate. In the comedies of gallantry and intrigue, with what freshness and delight we come to the serious and romantic parts! What a relief they are to the mind, after those of mere ribaldry or mirth! Those in Twelfth Night, for instance, and Much Ado about Nothing, where Olivia and Hero are concerned, throw even Malvolio and Sir Toby, and Benedick and Beatrice, into the shade. They 'give a very echo to the seat where love is throned.' What he has said of music might be said of his own poetry—

> 'Oh! it came o'er the ear like the sweet south
> Breathing upon a bank of violets,
> Stealing and giving odour.'

How poor, in general, what a falling-off, these parts seem in mere comic authors; how ashamed we are of them; and how fast we hurry the blank verse over, that we may get upon safe ground again, and recover our good opinion of the author! A striking and

lamentable instance of this may be found (by any one who chooses) in the high-flown speeches in Sir Richard Steele's Conscious Lovers. —As good an example as any of this informing and redeeming power in our author's genius might be taken from the comic scenes in both parts of Henry IV. Nothing can go much lower in intellect or morals than many of the characters. Here are knaves and fools in abundance, of the meanest order, and stripped stark-naked. But genius, like charity, 'covers a multitude of sins:' we pity as much as we despise them; in spite of our disgust we like them, because they like themselves, and because we are made to sympathise with them; and the ligament, fine as it is, which links them to humanity, is never broken. Who would quarrel with Wart or Feeble, or Mouldy or Bull-calf, or even with Pistol, Nym, or Bardolph? None but a hypocrite. The severe censurers of the morals of imaginary characters can generally find a hole for their own vices to creep out at; and yet do not perceive how it is that the imperfect and even deformed characters in Shakspeare's plays, as done to the life, by forming a part of our personal consciousness, claim our personal forgiveness, and suspend or evade our moral judgment, by bribing our self-love to side with them. Not to do so, is not morality, but affectation, stupidity, or ill-nature. I have more sympathy with one of Shakspeare's pick-purses, Gadshill or Peto, than I can possibly have with any member of the Society for the Suppression of Vice, and would by no means assist to deliver the one into the hands of the other. Those who cannot be persuaded to draw a veil over the foibles of ideal characters, may be suspected of wearing a mask over their own! Again, in point of understanding and attainments, Shallow sinks low enough; and yet his cousin Silence is a foil to him; he is the shadow of a shade, glimmers on the very verge of downright imbecility, and totters on the brink of nothing. 'He has been merry twice or once ere now,' and is hardly persuaded to break his silence in a song. Shallow has 'heard the chimes at midnight,' and roared out glees and catches at taverns and inns of court, when he was young. So, at least, he tells his cousin Silence, and Falstaff encourages the loftiness of his pretensions. Shallow would be thought a great man among his dependents and followers; Silence is nobody—not even in his own opinion: yet he sits in the orchard, and eats his carraways and pippins among the rest. Shakspeare takes up the meanest subjects with the same tenderness that we do an insect's wing, and would not kill a fly. To give a more particular instance of what I mean, I will take the inimitable and affecting, though most absurd and ludicrous dialogue, between Shallow and Silence, on the death of old Double.

'*Shallow.* Come on, come on, come on; give me your hand, Sir; give me your hand, Sir; an early stirrer, by the rood. And how doth my good cousin Silence?

Silence. Good morrow, good cousin Shallow.

Shallow. And how doth my cousin, your bedfellow? and your fairest daughter, and mine, my god-daughter Ellen?

Silence. Alas, a black ouzel, cousin Shallow.

Shallow. By yea and nay, Sir; I dare say, my cousin William is become a good scholar: he is at Oxford still, is he not?

Silence. Indeed, Sir, to my cost.

Shallow. He must then to the Inns of Court shortly. I was once of Clement's-Inn; where, I think, they will talk of mad Shallow yet.

Silence. You were called lusty Shallow then, cousin.

Shallow. I was called any thing, and I would have done any thing indeed, and roundly too. There was I, and little John Doit of Staffordshire, and black George Bare, and Francis Pickbone, and Will Squele a Cotswold man, you had not four such swinge-bucklers in all the Inns of Court again; and, I may say to you, we knew where the bona-robas were, and had the best of them all at commandment. Then was Jack Falstaff (now Sir John, a boy,) and page to Thomas Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk.

Silence. This Sir John, cousin, that comes hither anon about soldiers?

Shallow. The same Sir John, the very same: I saw him break Schoggan's head at the court-gate, when he was a crack, not thus high; and the very same day did I fight with one Sampson Stockfish, a fruiterer, behind Gray's-Inn. O, the mad days that I have spent! and to see how many of mine old acquaintance are dead!

Silence. We shall all follow, cousin.

Shallow. Certain, 'tis certain, very sure, very sure: death (as the Psalmist saith) is certain to all, all shall die.—How a good yoke of bullocks at Stamford fair?

Silence. Truly, cousin, I was not there.

Shallow. Death is certain. Is old Double of your town living yet?

Silence. Dead, Sir.

Shallow. Dead! see, see! he drew a good bow: and dead? he shot a fine shoot. John of Gaunt loved him well, and betted much money on his head. Dead! he would have clapped i'th' clout at twelve score; and carried you a forehand shaft a fourteen and fourteen and a half, that it would have done a man's heart good to see.—How a score of ewes now?

Silence. Thereafter as they be: a score of good ewes may be worth ten pounds.

Shallow. And is old Double dead?'

There is not any thing more characteristic than this in all Shakspeare. A finer sermon on mortality was never preached. We see the frail condition of human life, and the weakness of the human understanding in Shallow's reflections on it; who, while the past is sliding from beneath his feet, still clings to the present. The meanest

circumstances are shewn through an atmosphere of abstraction that dignifies them: their very insignificance makes them more affecting, for they instantly put a check on our aspiring thoughts, and remind us that, seen through that dim perspective, the difference between the great and little, the wise and foolish, is not much. 'One touch of nature makes the whole world kin:' and old Double, though his exploits had been greater, could but have had his day. There is a pathetic *naiveté* mixed up with Shallow's common-place reflections and impertinent digressions. The reader laughs (as well he may) in reading the passage, but he lays down the book to think. The wit, however diverting, is social and humane. But this is not the distinguishing characteristic of wit, which is generally provoked by folly, and spends its venom upon vice.

The fault, then, of Shakspeare's comic Muse is, in my opinion, that it is too good-natured and magnanimous. It mounts above its quarry. It is 'apprehensive, quick, forgetive, full of nimble, fiery, and delectable shapes:' but it does not take the highest pleasure in making human nature look as mean, as ridiculous, and contemptible as possible. It is in this respect, chiefly, that it differs from the comedy of a later, and (what is called) a more refined period. Genteel comedy is the comedy of fashionable life, and of artificial character and manners. The most pungent ridicule, is that which is directed to mortify vanity, and to expose affectation; but vanity and affectation, in their most exorbitant and studied excesses, are the ruling principles of society, only in a highly advanced state of civilisation and manners. Man can hardly be said to be a truly contemptible animal, till, from the facilities of general intercourse, and the progress of example and opinion, he becomes the ape of the extravagances of other men. The keenest edge of satire is required to distinguish between the true and false pretensions to taste and elegance; its lash is laid on with the utmost severity, to drive before it the common herd of knaves and fools, not to lacerate and terrify the single stragglers. In a word, it is when folly is epidemic, and vice worn as a mark of distinction, that all the malice of wit and humour is called out and justified to detect the imposture, and prevent the contagion from spreading. The fools in Wycherley and Congreve are of their own, or one another's making, and deserve to be well scourged into common sense and decency: the fools in Shakspeare are of his own or nature's making; and it would be unfair to probe to the quick, or hold up to unqualified derision, the faults which are involuntary and incorrigible, or those which you yourself encourage and exaggerate, from the pleasure you take in witnessing them. Our later comic writers represent a state of manners, in which to be a

man of wit and pleasure about town was become the fashion, and in which the swarms of egregious pretenders in both kinds openly kept one another in countenance, and were become a public nuisance. Shakspeare, living in a state of greater rudeness and simplicity, chiefly gave certain characters which were a kind of *grotesques*, or solitary excrescences growing up out of their native soil without affectation, and which he undertook kindly to pamper for the public entertainment. For instance, Sir Andrew Aguecheek is evidently a creature of the poet's own fancy. The author lends occasion to his absurdity to shew itself as much as he pleases, devises antics for him which would not enter into his own head, makes him 'go to church in a galliard, and return home in a coranto;' adds fuel to his folly, or throws cold water on his courage; makes his puny extravagances venture out or slink into corners without asking his leave; encourages them into indiscreet luxuriance, or checks them in the bud, just as it suits him for the jest's sake. The gratification of the fancy, 'and furnishing matter for innocent mirth,' are, therefore, the chief object of this and other characters like it, rather than reforming the moral sense, or indulging our personal spleen. But Tattle and Sparkish, who are fops cast not in the mould of fancy, but of fashion, who have a tribe of forerunners and followers, who catch certain diseases of the mind on purpose to communicate the infection, and are screened in their preposterous eccentricities by their own conceit and by the world's opinion, are entitled to no quarter, and receive none. They think themselves objects of envy and admiration, and on that account are doubly objects of our contempt and ridicule.—We find that the scenes of Shakspeare's comedies are mostly laid in the country, or are transferable there at pleasure. The genteel comedy exists only in towns, and crowds of borrowed characters, who copy others as the satirist copies them, and who are only seen to be despised. 'All beyond Hyde Park is a desart to it:' while there the pastoral and poetic comedy begins to vegetate and flourish, unpruned, idle, and fantastic. It is hard to 'lay waste a country gentleman' in a state of nature, whose humours may have run a little wild or to seed, or to lay violent hands on a young booby 'squire, whose absurdities have not yet arrived at years of discretion: but my Lord Foppington, who is 'the prince of coxcombs,' and 'proud of being at the head of so prevailing a party,' deserves his fate. I am not for going so far as to pronounce Shakspeare's 'manners damnable, because he had not seen the court;' but I think that comedy does not find its richest harvest till individual infirmities have passed into general manners, and it is the example of courts, chiefly, that stamps folly with credit and currency, or glosses over vice with meretricious lustre. I conceive,

therefore, that the golden period of our comedy was just after the age of Charles II. when the town first became tainted with the affectation of the manners and conversation of fashionable life, and before the distinction between rusticity and elegance, art and nature, was lost (as it afterwards was) in a general diffusion of knowledge, and the reciprocal advantages of civil intercourse. It is to be remarked, that the union of the three gradations of artificial elegance and courtly accomplishments in one class, of the affectation of them in another, and of absolute rusticity in a third, forms the highest point of perfection of the comedies of this period, as we may see in Vanbrugh's Lord Foppington, Sir Tunbelly Clumsy, and Miss Hoyden; Lady Townly, Count Basset, and John Moody; in Congreve's Millamant, Lady Wishfort, Witwoud, Sir Wilful Witwoud, and the rest.

In another point of view, or with respect to that part of comedy which relates to gallantry and intrigue, the difference between Shakspeare's comic heroines and those of a later period may be referred to the same distinction between natural and artificial life, between the world of fancy and the world of fashion. The refinements of romantic passion arise out of the imagination brooding over 'airy nothing,' or over a favourite object, where 'love's golden shaft hath killed the flock of all affections else:' whereas the refinements of this passion in genteel comedy, or in every-day life, may be said to arise out of repeated observation and experience, diverting and frittering away the first impressions of things by a multiplicity of objects, and producing, not enthusiasm, but fastidiousness or giddy dissipation. For the one a comparatively rude age and strong feelings are best fitted; for 'there the mind must minister to itself:' to the other, the progress of society and a knowledge of the world are essential; for here the effect does not depend on leaving the mind concentred in itself, but on the wear and tear of the heart, amidst the complex and rapid movements of the artificial machinery of society, and on the arbitrary subjection of the natural course of the affections to every the slightest fluctuation of fashion, caprice, or opinion. Thus Olivia, in Twelfth Night, has but one admirer of equal rank with herself, and but one love, to whom she innocently plights her hand and heart; or if she had a thousand lovers, she would be the sole object of their adoration and burning vows, without a rival. The heroine of romance and poetry sits secluded in the bowers of fancy, sole queen and arbitress of all hearts; and as the character is one of imagination, 'of solitude and melancholy musing born,' so it may be best drawn from the imagination. Millamant, in the Way of the World, on the contrary, who is the fine lady or heroine of comedy, has so many lovers, that she surfeits on admiration,

till it becomes indifferent to her; so many rivals, that she is forced to put on a thousand airs of languid affectation to mortify and vex them more; so many offers, that she at last gives her hand to the man of her heart, rather to escape the persecution of their addresses, and out of levity and disdain, than from any serious choice of her own. This is a comic character; its essence consists in making light of things from familiarity and use, and as it is formed by habit and outward circumstances, so it requires actual observation, and an acquaintance with the modes of artificial life, to describe it with the utmost possible grace and precision. Congreve, who had every other opportunity, was but a young man when he wrote this character; and that makes the miracle the greater.

I do not, in short, consider comedy as exactly an affair of the heart or the imagination; and it is for this reason only that I think Shakspeare's comedies deficient. I do not, however, wish to give a preference of any comedies over his; but I do perceive a difference between his comedies and some others that are, notwithstanding, excellent in their way, and I have endeavoured to point out in what this difference consists, as well as I could. Finally, I will not say that he had not as great a natural genius for comedy as any one; but I may venture to say, that he had not the same artificial models and regulated mass of fashionable absurdity or elegance to work upon.

The superiority of Shakspeare's natural genius for comedy cannot be better shewn than by a comparison between his comic characters and those of Ben Jonson. The matter is the same: but how different is the manner! The one gives fair-play to nature and his own genius, while the other trusts almost entirely to imitation and custom. Shakspeare takes his groundwork in individual character and the manners of his age, and raises from them a fantastical and delightful superstructure of his own: the other takes the same groundwork in matter-of-fact, but hardly ever rises above it; and the more he strives, is but the more enveloped 'in the crust of formality' and the crude circumstantials of his subject. His genius (not to profane an old and still venerable name, but merely to make myself understood) resembles the grub more than the butterfly, plods and grovels on, wants wings to wanton in the idle summer's air, and catch the golden light of poetry. Ben Jonson is a great borrower from the works of others, and a plagiarist even from nature; so little freedom is there in his imitations of her, and he appears to receive her bounty like an alms. His works read like translations, from a certain cramp manner, and want of adaptation. Shakspeare, even when he takes whole passages from books, does it with a spirit, felicity, and mastery over his subject, that instantly makes them his own; and shews more

independence of mind and original thinking in what he plunders without scruple, than Ben Jonson often did in his most studied passages, forced from the sweat and labour of his brain. His style is as dry, as literal, and meagre, as Shakspeare's is exuberant, liberal, and unrestrained. The one labours hard, lashes himself up, and produces little pleasure with all his fidelity and tenaciousness of purpose: the other, without putting himself to any trouble, or thinking about his success, performs wonders,—

> 'Does mad and fantastic execution,
> Engaging and redeeming of himself,
> With such a careless force and forceless[1] care,
> As if that luck, in very spite of cunning,
> Bade him win all.'

There are people who cannot taste olives—and I cannot much relish Ben Jonson, though I have taken some pains to do it, and went to the task with every sort of good will. I do not deny his power or his merit; far from it: but it is to me of a repulsive and unamiable kind. He was a great man in himself, but one cannot readily sympathise with him. His works, as the characteristic productions of an individual mind, or as records of the manners of a particular age, cannot be valued too highly; but they have little charm for the mere general reader. Schlegel observes, that whereas Shakspeare gives the springs of human nature, which are always the same, or sufficiently so to be interesting and intelligible; Jonson chiefly gives the *humours* of men, as connected with certain arbitrary or conventional modes of dress, action, and expression, which are intelligible only while they last, and not very interesting at any time. Shakspeare's characters are men; Ben Jonson's are more like machines, governed by mere routine, or by the convenience of the poet, whose property they are. In reading the one, we are let into the minds of his characters, we see the play of their thoughts, how their humours flow and work: the author takes a range over nature, and has an eye to every object or occasion that presents itself to set off and heighten the ludicrous character he is describing. His humour (so to speak) bubbles, sparkles, and finds its way in all directions, like a natural spring. In Ben Jonson it is, as it were, confined in a leaden cistern, where it stagnates and corrupts; or directed only through certain artificial pipes and conduits, to answer a given purpose. The comedy of this author is far from being 'lively, audible, and full of vent:' it is for the most part obtuse, obscure, forced, and tedious. He wears out a jest to the last shred and coarsest grain. His imagination fastens

[1] Unforced.

instinctively on some one mark or sign by which he designates the individual, and never lets it go, for fear of not meeting with any other means to express himself by. A cant phrase, an odd gesture, an old-fashioned regimental uniform, a wooden leg, a tobacco-box, or a hacked sword, are the standing topics by which he embodies his characters to the imagination. They are cut and dried comedy; the letter, not the spirit of wit and humour. Each of his characters has a particular cue, a professional badge which he wears and is known by, and by nothing else. Thus there is no end of Captain Otter, his Bull, his Bear, and his Horse, which are no joke at first, and do not become so by being repeated twenty times. It is a mere matter of fact, that some landlord of his acquaintance called his drinking cups by these ridiculous names; but why need we be told so more than once, or indeed at all? There is almost a total want of variety, fancy, relief, and of those delightful transitions which abound, for instance, in Shakspeare's tragi-comedy. In Ben Jonson, we find ourselves generally in low company, and we see no hope of getting out of it. He is like a person who fastens upon a disagreeable subject, and cannot be persuaded to leave it. His comedy, in a word, has not what Shakspeare somewhere calls 'bless'd conditions.' It is cross-grained, mean, and mechanical. It is handicraft wit. Squalid poverty, sheer ignorance, bare-faced impudence, or idiot imbecility, are his dramatic common-places—things that provoke pity or disgust, instead of laughter. His portraits are caricatures by dint of their very likeness, being extravagant tautologies of themselves; as his plots are improbable by an excess of consistency; for he goes thorough-stitch with whatever he takes in hand, makes one contrivance answer all purposes, and every obstacle give way to a predetermined theory. For instance, nothing can be more incredible than the mercenary conduct of Corvino, in delivering up his wife to the palsied embraces of Volpone; and yet the poet does not seem in the least to boggle at the incongruity of it: but the more it is in keeping with the absurdity of the rest of the fable, and the more it advances it to an incredible catastrophe, the more he seems to dwell upon it with complacency and a sort of wilful exaggeration, as if it were a logical discovery or corollary from well-known premises. He would no more be baffled in the working out a plot, than some people will be baffled in an argument. 'If to be wise were to be obstinate,' our author might have laid signal claim to this title. Old Ben was of a scholastic turn, and had dealt a little in the occult sciences and controversial divinity. He was a man of strong crabbed sense, retentive memory, acute observation, great fidelity of description and keeping in character, a power of working out an idea so as to make it painfully true and

oppressive, and with great honesty and manliness of feeling, as well as directness of understanding: but with all this, he wanted, to my thinking, that genial spirit of enjoyment and finer fancy, which constitute the essence of poetry and of wit. The sense of reality exercised a despotic sway over his mind, and equally weighed down and clogged his perception of the beautiful or the ridiculous. He had a keen sense of what was true and false, but not of the difference between the agreeable and disagreeable; or if he had, it was by his understanding rather than his imagination, by rule and method, not by sympathy, or intuitive perception of 'the gayest, happiest attitude of things.' There was nothing spontaneous, no impulse or ease about his genius: it was all forced, up-hill work, making a toil of a pleasure. And hence his overweening admiration of his own works, from the effort they had cost him, and the apprehension that they were not proportionably admired by others, who knew nothing of the pangs and throes of his Muse in child-bearing. In his satirical descriptions he seldom stops short of the lowest and most offensive point of meanness; and in his serious poetry he seems to repose with complacency only on the pedantic and far-fetched, the *ultima Thule* of his knowledge. He has a conscience of letting nothing escape the reader that he knows. *Aliquando sufflaminandus erat*, is as true of him as it was of Shakspeare, but in a quite different sense. He is doggedly bent upon fatiguing you with a favourite idea; whereas, Shakspeare overpowers and distracts attention by the throng and indiscriminate variety of his. His Sad Shepherd is a beautiful fragment. It was a favourite with the late Mr. Horne Tooke: indeed it is no wonder, for there was a sort of sympathy between the two men. Ben was like the modern wit and philosopher, a grammarian and a hard-headed thinker.—There is an amusing account of Ben Jonson's private manners in Howel's Letters, which is not generally known, and which I shall here extract.

'*From James Howel, Esq. to Sir Thomas Hawk, Kt.*

'Sir, *Westminster, 5th April, 1636.*

'I was invited yesternight to a solemn supper by B. J. where you were deeply remembered; there was good company, excellent cheer, choice wines, and jovial welcome: one thing intervened, which almost spoiled the relish of the rest, that B. began to engross all the discourse, to vapour extremely of himself, and, by vilifying others, to magnify his own Muse. T. Ca. (Tom Carew) buzzed me in the ear, that though Ben had barrelled up a great deal of knowledge, yet it seems he had not read the ethics, which, among other precepts of morality, forbid self-commendation, declaring it to be an ill-favoured solecism in good manners. It made me think upon the lady (not very young) who having a good while given her

guests neat entertainment, a capon being brought upon the table, instead of a spoon, she took a mouthful of claret, and spouted into the hollow bird: such an accident happened in this entertainment: you know—*Propria laus sordet in ore*: be a man's breath ever so sweet, yet it makes one's praise stink, if he makes his own mouth the conduit-pipe of it. But for my part I am content to dispense with the Roman infirmity of Ben, now that time hath snowed upon his pericranium. You know Ovid and (your) Horace were subject to this humour, the first bursting out into—

Jamque opus exegi, quod nec Jovis ira nec ignis, &c.

the other into—

Exegi monumentum ære perennius, &c.

As also Cicero, while he forced himself into this hexameter: *O fortunatam natam, me consule Romam!* There is another reason that excuseth B. which is, that if one be allowed to love the natural issue of his body, why not that of the brain, which is of a spiritual and more noble extraction?'

The concurring testimony of all his contemporaries agrees with his own candid avowal, as to Ben Jonson's personal character. He begins, for instance, an epistle to Drayton in these words—

'Michael, by some 'tis doubted if I be
A friend at all; or if a friend, to thee.'

Of Shakspeare's comedies I have already given a detailed account, which is before the public, and which I shall not repeat of course: but I shall give a cursory sketch of the principal of Ben Jonson's.—The Silent Woman is built upon the supposition of an old citizen disliking noise, who takes to wife Epicene (a supposed young lady) for the reputation of her silence, and with a view to disinherit his nephew, who has laughed at his infirmity; when the ceremony is no sooner over than the bride turns out a very shrew, his house becomes a very Babel of noises, and he offers his nephew his own terms to unloose the matrimonial knot, which is done by proving that Epicene is no woman. There is some humour in the leading character, but too much is made out of it, not in the way of Moliere's exaggerations, which, though extravagant, are fantastical and ludicrous, but of serious, plodding, minute prolixity. The first meeting between Morose and Epicene is well managed, and does not 'o'erstep the modesty of nature,' from the very restraint imposed by the situation of the parties—by the affected taciturnity of the one, and the other's singular dislike of noise. The whole story, from the beginning to the end, is a gratuitous assumption, and the height of improbability. The author, in sustaining the weight of his plot, seems like a balance-master who supports a number of people, piled one upon another, on his hands, his knees, his shoulders, but with a

great effort on his own part, and with a painful effect to the beholders. The scene between Sir Amorous La Foole and Sir John Daw, in which they are frightened by a feigned report of each other's courage, into a submission to all sorts of indignities, which they construe into flattering civilities, is the same device as that in Twelfth Night between Sir Andrew Aguecheek and Viola, carried to a paradoxical and revolting excess. Ben Jonson had no idea of decorum in his dramatic fictions, which Milton says is the principal thing, but went on caricaturing himself and others till he could go no farther in extravagance, and sink no lower in meanness. The titles of his *dramatis personæ*, such as Sir Amorous La Foole, Truewit, Sir John Daw, Sir Politic Would-be, &c. &c. which are significant and knowing, shew his determination to overdo every thing by thus letting you into their characters beforehand, and afterwards proving their pretensions by their names. Thus Peregrine, in Volpone, says, 'Your name, Sir? *Politick.* My name is Politick Would-be.' To which Peregrine replies, 'Oh, that speaks him.' How it should, if it was his real name, and not a nick-name given him on purpose by the author, is hard to conceive. This play was Dryden's favourite. It is indeed full of sharp, biting sentences against the women, of which he was fond. The following may serve as a specimen. Truewit says, 'Did I not tell thee, Dauphine? Why, all their actions are governed by crude opinion, without reason or cause: they know not why they do any thing; but, as they are informed, believe, judge, praise, condemn, love, hate, and in emulation one of another, do all these things alike. Only they have a natural inclination sways 'em generally to the worst, when they are left to themselves.' This is a cynical sentence; and we may say of the rest of his opinions, that 'even though we should hold them to be true, yet it is slander to have them so set down.' The women in this play indeed justify the author's severity; they are altogether abominable. They have an utter want of principle and decency, and are equally without a sense of pleasure, taste, or elegance. Madame Haughty, Madame Centaur, and Madame Mavis, form the College, as it is here pedantically called. They are a sort of candidates for being upon the town, but cannot find seducers, and a sort of blue-stockings, before the invention of letters. Mistress Epicene, the silent gentlewoman, turns out not to be a woman at all; which is not a very pleasant *denouement* of the plot, and is itself an incident apparently taken from the blundering blindman's-buff conclusion of the Merry Wives of Windsor. What Shakspeare might introduce by an accident, and as a mere passing jest, Ben Jonson would set about building a whole play upon. The directions for making love given

by Truewit, the author's favourite, discover great knowledge and shrewdness of observation, mixed with the acuteness of malice, and approach to the best style of comic dialogue. But I must refer to the play itself for them.

The Fox, or Volpone, is his best play. It is prolix and improbable, but intense and powerful. It is written *con amore*. It is made up of cheats and dupes, and the author is at home among them. He shews his hatred of the one and contempt for the other, and makes them set one another off to great advantage. There are several striking dramatic contrasts in this play, where the Fox lies *perdue* to watch his prey, where Mosca is the dextrous go-between outwitting his gulls, his employer, and himself, and where each of the gaping legacy-hunters, the lawyer, the merchant, and the miser, eagerly occupied with the ridiculousness of the other's pretensions, is blind only to the absurdity of his own: but the whole is worked up too mechanically, and our credulity overstretched at last revolts into scepticism, and our attention overtasked flags into drowsiness. This play seems formed on the model of Plautus, in unity of plot and interest; and old Ben, in emulating his classic model, appears to have done his best. There is the same caustic unsparing severity in it as in his other works. His patience is tried to the utmost. His words drop gall.

> 'Hood an ass with reverend purple,
> So you can hide his too ambitious ears,
> And he shall pass for a cathedral doctor.'

The scene between Volpone, Mosca, Voltore, Corvino, and Corbaccio, at the outset, will shew the dramatic power in the conduct of this play, and will be my justification in what I have said of the literal tenaciousness (to a degree that is repulsive) of the author's imaginary descriptions.

Every Man in his Humour, is a play well-known to the public. This play acts better than it reads. The pathos in the principal character, Kitely, is 'as dry as the remainder biscuit after a voyage.' There is, however, a certain good sense, discrimination, or logic of passion in the part, which affords excellent hints for an able actor, and which, if properly pointed, gives it considerable force on the stage. Bobadil is the only actually striking character in the play, and the real hero of the piece. His well-known proposal for the pacification of Europe, by killing some twenty of them, each his man a day, is as good as any other that has been suggested up to the present moment. His extravagant affectation, his blustering and cowardice, are an entertaining medley; and his final defeat and

exposure, though exceedingly humorous, are the most affecting part of the story. Brain-worm is a particularly dry and abstruse character. We neither know his business nor his motives: his plots are as intricate as they are useless, and as the ignorance of those he imposes upon is wonderful. This is the impression in reading it. Yet from the bustle and activity of this character on the stage, the changes of dress, the variety of affected tones and gipsy jargon, and the limping affected gestures, it is a very amusing theatrical exhibition. The rest, Master Matthew, Master Stephen, Cob and Cob's wife, were living in the sixteenth century. That is all we all know of them. But from the very oddity of their appearance and behaviour, they have a very droll and even picturesque effect when acted. It seems a revival of the dead. We believe in their existence when we see them. As an example of the power of the stage in giving reality and interest to what otherwise would be without it, I might mention the scene in which Brain-worm praises Master Stephen's leg. The folly here is insipid from its being seemingly carried to an excess, till we see it; and then we laugh the more at it, the more incredible we thought it before.

Bartholomew Fair is chiefly remarkable for the exhibition of odd humours and tumbler's tricks, and is on that account amusing to read once.—The Alchymist is the most famous of this author's comedies, though I think it does not deserve its reputation. It contains all that is quaint, dreary, obsolete, and hopeless in this once-famed art, but not the golden dreams and splendid disappointments. We have the mere circumstantials of the sublime science, pots and kettles, aprons and bellows, crucibles and diagrams, all the refuse and rubbish, not the essence, the true *elixir vitæ*. There is, however, one glorious scene between Surly and Sir Epicure Mammon, which is the finest example I know of dramatic sophistry, or of an attempt to prove the existence of a thing by an imposing description of its effects; but compared with this, the rest of the play is a *caput mortuum*. The scene I allude to is the following:

'*Mammon*. Come on, Sir. Now, you set your foot on snore,
In *Novo Orbe*; here's the rich Peru:
And there within, Sir, are the golden mines,
Great Solomon's Ophir! He was sailing to 't
Three years, but we have reached it in ten months.
This is the day wherein, to all my friends,
I will pronounce the happy word, BE RICH;
This day you shall be Spectatissimi.
You shall no more deal with the hollow dye,
Or the frail card. * * * * * * * *

You shall start up young viceroys,
And have your punks and punketees, my Surly,
And unto thee, I speak it first, BE RICH.
Where is my Subtle, there? Within, ho!
Face. [*within*] Sir, he 'll come to you, by and by.
Mam. That is his Firedrake,
His Lungs, his Zephyrus, he that puffs his coals,
Till he firk nature up in her own centre.
You are not faithful, Sir. This night I 'll change
All that is metal in my house to gold:
And early in the morning, will I send
To all the plumbers and the pewterers
And buy their tin and lead up; and to Lothbury,
For all the copper.
Surly. What, and turn that too?
Mam. Yes, and I 'll purchase Devonshire and Cornwall,
And make them perfect Indies! You admire now?
Surly. No, faith.
Mam. But when you see th' effects of the great medicine,
Of which one part projected on a hundred
Of Mercury, or Venus, or the Moon,
Shall turn it to as many of the Sun;
Nay, to a thousand, so *ad infinitum*;
You will believe me.
Surly. Yes, when I see't, I will—
Mam. Ha! why?
Do you think I fable with you? I assure you,
He that has once the flower of the Sun,
The perfect ruby, which we call Elixir,
Not only can do that, but, by its virtue,
Can confer honour, love, respect, long life;
Give safety, valour, yea, and victory,
To whom he will. In eight and twenty days,
I 'll make an old man of fourscore, a child.
Surly. No doubt; he 's that already.
Mam. Nay, I mean,
Restore his years, renew him, like an eagle,
To the fifth age; make him get sons and daughters,
Young giants; as our philosophers have done,
The ancient patriarchs, afore the flood,
But taking, once a week, on a knife's point,
The quantity of a grain of mustard of it;
Become stout Marses, and beget young Cupids.
* * * * * * * *
You are incredulous.
Surly. Faith, I have a humour,
I would not willingly be gull'd. Your stone
Cannot transmute me.
Mam. Pertinax Surly,

Will you believe antiquity? records?
I'll shew you a book where Moses and his sister,
And Solomon have written of the art;
Ay, and a treatise penn'd by Adam—
Surly. How!
Mam. Of the philosopher's stone, and in High Dutch.
Surly. Did Adam write, Sir, in High Dutch?
Mam. He did;
Which proves it was the primitive tongue.
*   *   *   *   *   *   *   *

[*Enter Face, as a servant.*
How now!
Do we succeed? Is our day come, and holds it?
Face. The evening will set red upon you, Sir:
You have colour for it, crimson; the red ferment
Has done his office: three hours hence prepare you
To see projection.
Mam. Pertinax, my Surly,
Again I say to thee, aloud, Be rich.
This day thou shalt have ingots; and to-morrow
Give lords the affront. * * * * Where's thy master?
Face. At his prayers, Sir, he;
Good man, he's doing his devotions
For the success.
Mam. Lungs, I will set a period
To all thy labours; thou shalt be the master
Of my seraglio . . .
For I do mean
To have a list of wives and concubines
Equal with Solomon: * * * *
I will have all my beds blown up, not stuft:
Down is too hard; and then, mine oval room
Fill'd with such pictures as Tiberius took
From Elephantis, and dull Aretine
But coldly imitated. Then, my glasses
Cut in more subtle angles, to disperse
And multiply the figures, as I walk. * * * My mists
I'll have of perfume, vapoured about the room
To lose ourselves in; and my baths, like pits
To fall into: from whence we will come forth,
And roll us dry in gossamer and roses.
Is it arriv'd at ruby? Where I spy
A wealthy citizen, or a rich lawyer,
Have a sublimed pure wife, unto that fellow
I'll send a thousand pound to be my cuckold.
Face. And I shall carry it?
Mam. No. I'll have no bawds.
But fathers and mothers. They will do it best,
Best of all others. And my flatterers

Shall be the pure and gravest of divines
That I can get for money.
We will be brave, Puffe, now we have the medicine.
My meat shall all come in, in Indian shells,
Dishes of agat set in gold, and studded
With emeralds, sapphires, hyacinths, and rubies.
The tongues of carps, dormice, and camel's heels
Boil'd in the spirit of Sol, and dissolv'd pearl,
Apicius' diet, 'gainst the epilepsy;
And I will eat these broths with spoons of amber,
Headed with diamond and carbuncle.
My footboys shall eat pheasants, calver'd salmons,
Knots, godwits, lampreys; I myself will have
The beards of barbels serv'd instead of salads;
Oil'd mushrooms; and the swelling unctuous paps
Of a fat pregnant sow, newly cut off,
Drest with an exquisite and poignant sauce;
For which I'll say unto my cook, *There's gold,*
Go forth, and be a knight.
  Face. Sir, I'll go look
A little, how it heightens.
  Mam. Do. My shirts
I'll have of taffeta-sarsnet, soft and light,
As cobwebs; and for all my other raiment,
It shall be such as might provoke the Persian,
Were he to teach the world riot anew.
My gloves of fishes and birds' skins, perfum'd
With gums of Paradise and eastern air.
  Surly. And do you think to have the stone with this?
  Mam. No, I do think t' have all this with the stone.
  Surly. Why, I have heard, he must be *homo frugi,*
A pious, holy, and religious man,
One free from mortal sin, a very virgin.
  Mam. That makes it, Sir, he is so; but I buy it.
My venture brings it me. He, honest wretch,
A notable, superstitious, good soul,
Has worn his knees bare, and his slippers bald,
With prayer and fasting for it, and, Sir, let him
Do it alone, for me, still; here he comes;
Not a profane word afore him: 'tis poison.'

Act II. *scene* I.

I have only to add a few words on Beaumont and Fletcher. Rule a Wife and Have a Wife, the Chances, and the Wild Goose Chase, the original of the Inconstant, are superior in style and execution to any thing of Ben Jonson's. They are, indeed, some of the best comedies on the stage; and one proof that they are so, is, that they still hold possession of it. They shew the utmost alacrity of in-

vention in contriving ludicrous distresses, and the utmost spirit in bearing up against, or impatience and irritation under them. Don John, in the Chances, is the heroic in comedy. Leon, in Rule a Wife and Have a Wife, is a fine exhibition of the born gentleman and natural fool: the Copper Captain is sterling to this hour: his mistress, Estifania, only died the other day with Mrs. Jordan: and the two grotesque females, in the same play, act better than the Witches in Macbeth.

LECTURE III

ON COWLEY, BUTLER, SUCKLING, ETHEREGE, &C.

The metaphysical poets or wits of the age of James and Charles I. whose style was adopted and carried to a more dazzling and fantastic excess by Cowley in the following reign, after which it declined, and gave place almost entirely to the poetry of observation and reasoning, are thus happily characterised by Dr. Johnson.

'The metaphysical poets were men of learning, and to show their learning was their whole endeavour: but unluckily resolving to show it in rhyme, instead of writing poetry, they only wrote verses, and very often such verses as stood the trial of the finger better than of the ear; for the modulation was so imperfect, that they were only found to be verses by counting the syllables.

'If the father of criticism has rightly denominated poetry τέχνη μιμητικὴ, *an imitative art*, these writers will, without great wrong, lose their right to the name of poets, for they cannot be said to have imitated any thing; they neither copied nature nor life; neither painted the forms of matter, nor represented the operations of intellect.'

The whole of the account is well worth reading: it was a subject for which Dr. Johnson's powers both of thought and expression were better fitted than any other man's. If he had had the same capacity for following the flights of a truly poetic imagination, or for feeling the finer touches of nature, that he had felicity and force in detecting and exposing the aberrations from the broad and beaten path of propriety and common sense, he would have amply deserved the reputation he has acquired as a philosophical critic.

The writers here referred to (such as Donne, Davies, Crashaw, and others) not merely mistook learning for poetry—they thought any thing was poetry that differed from ordinary prose and the natural impression of things, by being intricate, far-fetched, and improbable. Their style was not so properly learned as metaphysical;

that is to say, whenever, by any violence done to their ideas, they could make out an abstract likeness or possible ground of comparison, they forced the image, whether learned or vulgar, into the service of the Muses. Any thing would do to 'hitch into a rhyme,' no matter whether striking or agreeable, or not, so that it would puzzle the reader to discover the meaning, and if there was the most remote circumstance, however trifling or vague, for the pretended comparison to hinge upon. They brought ideas together not the most, but the least like; and of which the collision produced not light, but obscurity—served not to strengthen, but to confound. Their mystical verses read like riddles or an allegory. They neither belong to the class of lively or severe poetry. They have not the force of the one, nor the gaiety of the other; but are an ill-assorted, unprofitable union of the two together, applying to serious subjects that quaint and partial style of allusion which fits only what is light and ludicrous, and building the most laboured conclusions on the most fantastical and slender premises. The object of the poetry of imagination is to raise or adorn one idea by another more striking or more beautiful: the object of these writers was to match any one idea with any other idea, *for better for worse*, as we say, and whether any thing was gained by the change of condition or not. The object of the poetry of the passions again is to illustrate any strong feeling, by shewing the same feeling as connected with objects or circumstances more palpable and touching; but here the object was to strain and distort the immediate feeling into some barely possible consequence or recondite analogy, in which it required the utmost stretch of misapplied ingenuity to trace the smallest connection with the original impression. In short, the poetry of this period was strictly the poetry not of ideas, but of *definitions*: it proceeded in mode and figure, by *genus* and specific difference; and was the logic of the schools, or an oblique and forced construction of dry, literal matter-of-fact, decked out in a robe of glittering conceits, and clogged with the halting shackles of verse. The imagination of the writers, instead of being conversant with the face of nature, or the secrets of the heart, was lost in the labyrinths of intellectual abstraction, or entangled in the technical quibbles and impertinent intricacies of language. The complaint so often made, and here repeated, is not of the want of power in these men, but of the waste of it; not of the absence of genius, but the abuse of it. They had (many of them) great talents committed to their trust, richness of thought, and depth of feeling; but they chose to hide them (as much as they possibly could) under a false shew of learning and unmeaning subtlety. From the style which they had systematically adopted, they thought nothing done till they had perverted simplicity into affectation, and

spoiled nature by art. They seemed to think there was an irreconcileable opposition between genius, as well as grace, and nature; tried to do without, or else constantly to thwart her; left nothing to her outward 'impress,' or spontaneous impulses, but made a point of twisting and torturing almost every subject they took in hand, till they had fitted it to the mould of their self-opinion and the previous fabrications of their own fancy, like those who pen acrostics in the shape of pyramids, and cut out trees into the shape of peacocks. Their chief aim is to make you wonder at the writer, not to interest you in the subject; and by an incessant craving after admiration, they have lost what they might have gained with less extravagance and affectation. So Cowper, who was of a quite opposite school, speaks feelingly of the misapplication of Cowley's poetical genius.

'And though reclaim'd by modern lights
From an erroneous taste,
I cannot but lament thy splendid wit
Entangled in the cobwebs of the schools.'

Donne, who was considerably before Cowley, is without his fancy, but was more recondite in his logic, and rigid in his descriptions. He is hence led, particularly in his satires, to tell disagreeable truths in as disagreeable a way as possible, or to convey a pleasing and affecting thought (of which there are many to be found in his other writings) by the harshest means, and with the most painful effort. His Muse suffers continual pangs and throes. His thoughts are delivered by the Cæsarean operation. The sentiments, profound and tender as they often are, are stifled in the expression; and 'heaved pantingly forth,' are 'buried quick again' under the ruins and rubbish of analytical distinctions. It is like poetry waking from a trance: with an eye bent idly on the outward world, and half-forgotten feelings crowding about the heart; with vivid impressions, dim notions, and disjointed words. The following may serve as instances of beautiful or impassioned reflections losing themselves in obscure and difficult applications. He has some lines to a Blossom, which begin thus:

'Little think'st thou, poor flow'r,
Whom I have watched six or seven days,
And seen thy birth, and seen what every hour
Gave to thy growth, thee to this height to raise,
And now dost laugh and triumph on this bough,
Little think'st thou
That it will freeze anon, and that I shall
To-morrow find thee fall'n, or not at all.'

This simple and delicate description is only introduced as a foundation for an elaborate metaphysical conceit as a parallel to it, in the next stanza.

> 'Little think'st thou (poor heart
> That labour'st yet to nestle thee,
> And think'st by hovering here to get a part
> In a forbidden or forbidding tree,
> And hop'st her stiffness by long siege to bow:)
> Little think'st thou,
> That thou to-morrow, ere the sun doth wake,
> Must with this sun and me a journey take.'

This is but a lame and impotent conclusion from so delightful a beginning.—He thus notices the circumstance of his wearing his late wife's hair about his arm, in a little poem which is called the Funeral:

> 'Whoever comes to shroud me, do not harm
> Nor question much
> That subtle wreath of hair, about mine arm;
> The mystery, the sign you must not touch.'

The scholastic reason he gives quite dissolves the charm of tender and touching grace in the sentiment itself—

> 'For 'tis my outward soul,
> Viceroy to that, which unto heaven being gone,
> Will leave this to control,
> And keep these limbs, her provinces, from dissolution.'

Again, the following lines, the title of which is Love's Deity, are highly characteristic of this author's manner, in which the thoughts are inlaid in a costly but imperfect mosaic-work.

> '*I long to talk with some old lover's ghost,*
> *Who died before the God of Love was born:*
> I cannot think that he, who then lov'd most,
> Sunk so low, as to love one which did scorn.
> But since this God produc'd a destiny,
> And that vice-nature, custom, lets it be;
> I must love her that loves not me.'

The stanza in the Epithalamion on a Count Palatine of the Rhine, has been often quoted against him, and is an almost irresistible illustration of the extravagances to which this kind of writing, which turns upon a pivot of words and possible allusions, is liable

Speaking of the bride and bridegroom he says, by way of serious compliment—

> 'Here lies a she-Sun, and a he-Moon there,
> She gives the best light to his sphere;
> Or each is both and all, and so
> They unto one another nothing owe.'

His love-verses and epistles to his friends give the most favourable idea of Donne. His satires are too clerical. He shews, if I may so speak, too much disgust, and, at the same time, too much contempt for vice. His dogmatical invectives hardly redeem the nauseousness of his descriptions, and compromise the imagination of his readers more than they assist their reason. The satirist does not write with the same authority as the divine, and should use his poetical privileges more sparingly. 'To the pure all things are pure,' is a maxim which a man like Dr. Donne may be justified in applying to himself; but he might have recollected that it could not be construed to extend to the generality of his readers, *without benefit of clergy*.

Bishop Hall's Satires are coarse railing in verse, and hardly that. Pope has, however, contrived to avail himself of them in some of his imitations.

Sir John Davies is the author of a poem on the Soul, and of one on Dancing. In both he shews great ingenuity, and sometimes terseness and vigour. In the last of these two poems his fancy *pirouettes* in a very lively and agreeable manner, but something too much in the style of a French opera-dancer, with sharp angular turns, and repeated deviations from the faultless line of simplicity and nature.

Crashaw was a writer of the same ambitious stamp, whose imagination was rendered still more inflammable by the fervors of fanaticism, and who having been converted from Protestantism to Popery (a weakness to which the 'seething brains' of the poets of this period were prone) by some visionary appearance of the Virgin Mary, poured out his devout raptures and zealous enthusiasm in a torrent of poetical hyperboles. The celebrated Latin Epigram on the miracle of our Saviour, 'The water blushed into wine,' is in his usual *hectic* manner. His translation of the contest between the Musician and the Nightingale is the best specimen of his powers.

Davenant's Gondibert is a tissue of stanzas, all aiming to be wise and witty, each containing something in itself, and the whole together amounting to nothing. The thoughts separately require so much attention to understand them, and arise so little out of the narrative,

that they with difficulty sink into the mind, and have no common feeling of interest to recal or link them together afterwards. The general style may be judged of by these two memorable lines in the description of the skeleton-chamber.

'Yet on that wall hangs he too, who so thought,
And she dried by him whom that he obeyed.'

Mr. Hobbes, in a prefatory discourse, has thrown away a good deal of powerful logic and criticism in recommendation of the plan of his friend's poem. Davenant, who was poet-laureate to Charles II. wrote several masques and plays which were well received in his time, but have not come down with equal applause to us.

Marvel (on whom I have already bestowed such praise as I could, for elegance and tenderness in his descriptive poems) in his satires and witty pieces was addicted to the affected and involved style here reprobated, as in his Flecknoe (the origin of Dryden's Macflecknoe) and in his satire on the Dutch. As an instance of this forced, far-fetched method of treating his subject, he says, in ridicule of the Hollanders, that when their dykes overflowed, the fish used to come to table with them,

'And sat not as a meat, but as a guest.'

There is a poem of Marvel's on the death of King Charles I. which I have not seen, but which I have heard praised by one whose praise is never high but of the highest things, for the beauty and pathos, as well as generous frankness of the sentiments, coming, as they did, from a determined and incorruptible political foe.

Shadwell was a successful and voluminous dramatic writer of much the same period. His Libertine (taken from the celebrated Spanish story) is full of spirit; but it is the spirit of licentiousness and impiety. At no time do there appear to have been such extreme speculations afloat on the subject of religion and morality, as there were shortly after the Reformation, and afterwards under the Stuarts, the differences being widened by political irritation; and the Puritans often over-acting one extreme out of grimace and hypocrisy, as the king's party did the other out of *bravado*.

Carew is excluded from his pretensions to the laureateship in Suckling's Sessions of the Poets, on account of his slowness. His verses are delicate and pleasing, with a certain feebleness, but with very little tincture of the affectation of this period. His masque (called *Cœlum Britannicum*) in celebration of a marriage at court, has not much wit nor fancy, but the accompanying prose directions and commentary on the mythological story, are written with

wonderful facility and elegance, in a style of familiar dramatic dialogue approaching nearer the writers of Queen Anne's reign than those of Queen Elizabeth's.

Milton's name is included by Dr. Johnson in the list of metaphysical poets on no better authority than his lines on Hobson the Cambridge Carrier, which he acknowledges were the only ones Milton wrote on this model. Indeed, he is the great contrast to that style of poetry, being remarkable for breadth and massiness, or what Dr. Johnson calls 'aggregation of ideas,' beyond almost any other poet. He has in this respect been compared to Michael Angelo, but not with much reason: his verses are

> –'inimitable on earth
> By model, or by shading pencil drawn.'

Suckling is also ranked, without sufficient warrant, among the metaphysical poets. Sir John was of 'the court, courtly;' and his style almost entirely free from the charge of pedantry and affectation. There are a few blemishes of this kind in his works, but they are but few. His compositions are almost all of them short and lively effusions of wit and gallantry, written in a familiar but spirited style, without much design or effort. His shrewd and taunting address to a desponding lover will sufficiently vouch for the truth of this account of the general cast of his best pieces.

> 'Why so pale and wan, fond lover?
> Pr'ythee why so pale?
> Will, when looking well can't move her,
> Looking ill prevail?
> Pr'ythee why so pale?
>
> Why so dull and mute, young sinner?
> Pr'ythee why so mute?
> Will, when speaking well, can't win her,
> Saying nothing do 't?
> Pr'ythee why so mute?
>
> Quit, quit for shame, this will not move,
> This cannot take her;
> If of herself she will not love,
> Nothing can make her;
> The Devil take her.'

The two short poems against Fruition, that beginning, 'There never yet was woman made, nor shall, but to be curst,'—the song, 'I pr'ythee, spare me, gentle boy, press me no more for that slight toy, that foolish trifle of a heart,'—another, ''Tis now, since I sat

down before, that foolish fort, a heart,'—*Lutea Alanson*—the set of similes, 'Hast thou seen the down in the air, when wanton winds have tost it,'—and his 'Dream,' which is of a more tender and romantic cast, are all exquisite in their way. They are the origin of the style of Prior and Gay in their short fugitive verses, and of the songs in the Beggar's Opera. His Ballad on a Wedding is his masterpiece, and is indeed unrivalled in that class of composition, for the voluptuous delicacy of the sentiments, and the luxuriant richness of the images. I wish I could repeat the whole, but that, from the change of manners, is impossible. The description of the bride is (half of it) as follows: the story is supposed to be told by one countryman to another:—

'Her finger was so small, the ring
Would not stay on, which they did bring;
    It was too wide a peck:
And to say truth (for out it must)
It look'd like the great collar (just)
    About our young colt's neck.

Her feet beneath her petticoat,
Like little mice, stole in and out,
    As if they fear'd the light:
But oh! she dances such a way!
No sun upon an Easter-day
    Is half so fine a sight.

Her cheeks so rare a white was on,
No daisy makes comparison,
    (Who sees them is undone)
For streaks of red were mingled there,
Such as are on a Cath'rine pear,
    (The side that 's next the sun.)

Her lips were red; and one was thin,
Compar'd to that was next her chin;
    (Some bee had stung it newly)
But (Dick) her eyes so guard her face,
I durst no more upon them gaze,
    Than on the sun in July.

Her mouth so small, when she does speak,
Thoud'st swear her teeth her words did break,
    That they might passage get;
But she so handled still the matter,
They came as good as ours, or better,
    And are not spent a whit.'

There is to me in the whole of this delightful performance a freshness and purity like the first breath of morning. Its sportive irony never trespasses on modesty, though it sometimes (laughing) threatens to do so! Suckling's Letters are full of habitual gaiety and good sense. His Discourse on Reason in Religion is well enough meant. Though he excelled in the conversational style of poetry, writing verse with the freedom and readiness, vivacity and unconcern, with which he would have talked on the most familiar and sprightly topics, his peculiar powers deserted him in attempting dramatic dialogue. His comedy of the *Goblins* is equally defective in plot, wit, and nature; it is a wretched list of *exits* and *entrances*, and the whole business of the scene is taken up in the unaccountable seizure, and equally unaccountable escapes, of a number of persons from a band of robbers in the shape of goblins, who turn out to be noblemen and gentlemen in disguise. Suckling was not a Grub-street author; or it might be said, that this play is like what he might have written after dreaming all night of duns and a spunging-house. His tragedies are no better: their titles are the most interesting part of them, Aglaura, Brennoralt, and the Sad One.

Cowley had more brilliancy of fancy and ingenuity of thought than Donne, with less pathos and sentiment. His mode of illustrating his ideas differs also from Donne's in this: that whereas Donne is contented to analyse an image into its component elements, and resolve it into its most abstracted species; Cowley first does this, indeed, but does not stop till he has fixed upon some other prominent example of the same general class of ideas, and forced them into a metaphorical union, by the medium of the generic definition. Thus he says—

'The Phœnix Pindar is a vast species alone.'

He means to say that he stands by himself: he is then 'a vast species alone:' then by applying to this generality the *principium individuationis*, he becomes a Phœnix, because the Phœnix is the only example of a species contained in an individual. Yet this is only a literal or metaphysical coincidence: and literally and metaphysically speaking, Pindar was not a species by himself, but only seemed so by pre-eminence or excellence; that is, from qualities of mind appealing to and absorbing the imagination, and which, therefore, ought to be represented in poetical language, by some other obvious and palpable image exhibiting the same kind or degree of excellence in other things, as when Gray compares him to the Theban eagle,

'Sailing with supreme dominion
Through the azure deep of air.'

Again, he talks in the Motto, or Invocation to his Muse, of 'marching the Muse's Hannibal' into undiscovered regions. That is, he thinks first of being a leader in poetry, and then he immediately, by virtue of this abstraction, becomes a Hannibal; though no two things can really be more unlike in all the associations belonging to them, than a leader of armies and a leader of the tuneful Nine. In like manner, he compares Bacon to Moses; for in *his* verses extremes are sure to meet. The Hymn to Light, which forms a perfect contrast to Milton's Invocation to Light, in the commencement of the third book of Paradise Lost, begins in the following manner:—

'First-born of Chaos, who so fair didst come
From the old negro's darksome womb!
Which, when it saw the lovely child,
The melancholy mass put on kind looks, and smil'd.'
* * * * * * * *

And soon after—

''Tis, I believe, this archery to show
That so much cost in colours thou,
And skill in painting, dost bestow,
Upon thy ancient arms, the gaudy heav'nly bow.

Swift as light thoughts their empty career run,
Thy race is finish'd when begun;
Let a post-angel start with thee,
And thou the goal of earth shalt reach as soon as he.'

The conceits here are neither wit nor poetry; but a burlesque upon both, made up of a singular metaphorical jargon, verbal generalities, and physical analogies. Thus his calling Chaos, or Darkness, 'the old negro,' would do for abuse or jest, but is too remote and degrading for serious poetry, and yet it is meant for such. The 'old negro' is at best a nickname, and the smile on its face loses its beauty in such company. The making out the rainbow to be a species of heraldic painting, and converting an angel into a post-boy, shew the same rage for comparison; but such comparisons are as odious as they are unjust. Dr. Johnson has multiplied instances of the same false style, in its various divisions and subdivisions.[1] Of Cowley's serious poems, the Complaint is the one I like the best; and some of his translations in the Essays, as those on Liberty and Retirement, are exceedingly good. The Odes to Vandyke, to the Royal Society, to Hobbes, and to the latter Brutus, beginning

[1] See his Lives of the British Poets, Vol. i.

'Excellent Brutus,' are all full of ingenious and high thoughts, impaired by a load of ornament and quaint disguises. The Chronicle, or list of his Mistresses, is the best of his original lighter pieces: but the best of his poems are the translations from Anacreon, which remain, and are likely to remain unrivalled. The spirit of wine and joy circulates in them; and though they are lengthened out beyond the originals, it is by fresh impulses of an eager and inexhaustible feeling of delight. Here are some of them:—

DRINKING

'The thirsty earth soaks up the rain,
And drinks, and gapes for drink again.
The plants suck in the earth, and are
With constant drinking fresh and fair.
The sea itself, which one would think
Should have but little need of drink,
Drinks twice ten thousand rivers up,
So fill'd that they o'erflow the cup.
The busy sun (and one would guess
By 's drunken fiery face no less)
Drinks up the sea, and, when he 'as done,
The moon and stars drink up the sun.
They drink and dance by their own light,
They drink and revel all the night.
Nothing in nature 's sober found,
But an eternal health goes round.
Fill up the bowl then, fill it high,
Fill all the glasses there; for why
Should every creature drink but I;
Why, man of morals, tell me why?'

This is a classical intoxication; and the poet's imagination, giddy with fancied joys, communicates its spirit and its motion to inanimate things, and makes all nature reel round with it. It is not easy to decide between these choice pieces, which may be reckoned among the *delights of human kind*; but that to the Grasshopper is one of the happiest as well as most serious:—

'Happy insect, what can be
In happiness compar'd to thee?
Fed with nourishment divine,
The dewy morning's gentle wine!
Nature waits upon thee still,
And thy verdant cup does fill;
'Tis filled wherever thou dost tread,
Nature's self thy Ganymede.
Thou dost drink, and dance, and sing;
Happier than the happiest king!

All the fields which thou dost see,
All the plants, belong to thee;
All that summer-hours produce,
Fertile made with early juice.
Man for thee does sow and plough,
Farmer he, and landlord thou!
Thou dost innocently joy;
Nor does thy luxury destroy;
The shepherd gladly heareth thee,
More harmonious than he.
Thee country hinds with gladness hear,
Prophet of the ripen'd year!
Thee Phœbus loves, and does inspire;
Phœbus is himself thy sire.
To thee, of all things upon earth,
Life is no longer than thy mirth.
Happy insect, happy thou!
Dost neither age nor winter know;
But, when thou'st drunk, and danc'd, and sung
Thy fill, the flowery leaves among,
(Voluptuous and wise withal,
Epicurean animal!)
Sated with thy summer feast,
Thou retir'st to endless rest.'

Cowley's Essays are among the most agreeable prose-compositions in our language, being equally recommended by sense, wit, learning, and interesting personal history, and written in a style quite free from the faults of his poetry. It is a pity that he did not cultivate his talent for prose more, and write less in verse, for he was clearly a man of more reflection than imagination. The Essays on Agriculture, on Liberty, on Solitude, and on Greatness, are all of them delightful. From the last I may give his account of Senecio as an addition to the instances of the ludicrous, which I have attempted to enumerate in the introductory Lecture; whose ridiculous affectation of grandeur Seneca the elder (he tells us) describes to this effect: 'Senecio was a man of a turbid and confused wit, who could not endure to speak any but mighty words and sentences, till this humour grew at last into so notorious a habit, or rather disease, as became the sport of the whole town: he would have no servants, but huge, massy fellows; no plate or household stuff, but thrice as big as the fashion: you may believe me, for I speak it without raillery, his extravagancy came at last into such a madness, that he would not put on a pair of shoes, each of which was not big enough for both his feet: he would eat nothing but what was great, nor touch any fruit but horse-plums and pound-pears: he kept a mistress that was

a very giantess, and made her walk too always in chiopins, till, at last, he got the surname of Senecio Grandio.' This was certainly the most absurd person we read of in antiquity. Cowley's character of Oliver Cromwell, which is intended as a satire, (though it certainly produces a very different impression on the mind), may vie for truth of outline and force of colouring with the masterpieces of the Greek and Latin historians. It may serve as a contrast to the last extract. 'What can be more extraordinary, than that a person of mean birth, no fortune, no eminent qualities of body, which have sometimes, or of mind, which have often, raised men to the highest dignities, should have the courage to attempt, and the happiness to succeed in, so improbable a design, as the destruction of one of the most ancient and most solidly-founded monarchies upon the earth? That he should have the power or boldness to put his prince and master to an open and infamous death; to banish that numerous and strongly-allied family; to do all this under the name and wages of a Parliament; to trample upon them too as he pleased, and spurn them out of doors when he grew weary of them; to raise up a new and unheard-of monster out of their ashes; to stifle that in the very infancy, and set up himself above all things that ever were called sovereign in England; to oppress all his enemies by arms, and all his friends afterwards by artifice; to serve all parties patiently for a while, and to command them victoriously at last; to over-run each corner of the three nations, and overcome with equal facility both the riches of the south and the poverty of the north; to be feared and courted by all foreign princes, and adopted a brother to the gods of the earth; to call together Parliaments with a word of his pen, and scatter them again with the breath of his mouth; to be humbly and daily petitioned that he would please to be hired, at the rate of two millions a-year, to be the master of those who had hired him before to be their servant; to have the estates and lives of three kingdoms as much at his disposal, as was the little inheritance of his father, and to be as noble and liberal in the spending of them; and lastly, (for there is no end of all the particulars of his glory) to bequeath all this with one word to his posterity; to die with peace at home, and triumph abroad; to be buried among kings, and with more than regal solemnity; and to leave a name behind him, not to be extinguished, but with the whole world; which as it is now too little for his praises, so might have been too for his conquests, if the short line of his human life could have been stretched out to the extent of his immortal designs!'

Cowley has left one comedy, called Cutter of Coleman Street, which met with an unfavourable reception at the time, and is now

(not undeservedly) forgotten. It contains, however, one good scene, which is rich both in fancy and humour, that between the puritanical bride, Tabitha, and her ranting royalist husband. It is said that this play was originally composed, and afterwards revived, as a satire upon the Presbyterian party; yet it was resented by the court party as a satire upon itself. A man must, indeed, be sufficiently blind with party-prejudice, to have considered this as a compliment to his own side of the question. 'Call you this backing of your friends?' The cavaliers are in this piece represented as reduced to the lowest shifts in point of fortune, and sunk still lower in point of principle.

The greatest single production of wit of this period, I might say of this country, is Butler's Hudibras. It contains specimens of every variety of drollery and satire, and those specimens crowded together into almost every page. The proof of this is, that nearly one half of his lines are got by heart, and quoted for mottos. In giving instances of different sorts of wit, or trying to recollect good things of this kind, they are the first which stand ready in the memory; and they are those which furnish the best tests and most striking illustrations of what we want. Dr. Campbell, in his Philosophy of Rhetoric, when treating of the subject of wit, which he has done very neatly and sensibly, has constant recourse to two authors, Pope and Butler, the one for ornament, the other more for use. Butler is equally in the hands of the learned and the vulgar; for the sense is generally as solid, as the images are amusing and grotesque. Whigs and Tories join in his praise. He could not, in spite of himself,

——'narrow his mind,
'And to party give up what was meant for mankind.'

Though his subject was local and temporary, his fame was not circumscribed within his own age. He was admired by Charles II. and has been rewarded by posterity. It is the poet's fate! It is not, perhaps, to be wondered at, that arbitrary and worthless monarchs like Charles II. should neglect those who pay court to them. The idol (if it had sense) would despise its worshippers. Indeed, Butler hardly merited any thing on the score of loyalty to the house of Stuart. True wit is not a parasite plant. The strokes which it aims at folly and knavery on one side of a question, tell equally home on the other. Dr. Zachary Grey, who added notes to the poem, and abused the leaders of Cromwell's party by name, would be more likely to have gained a pension for his services than Butler, who was above such petty work. A poem like Hudibras could not be *made to order of a court.* Charles might very well have reproached the author with wanting to shew his own wit and sense rather than to favour a tottering cause; and he has even been

suspected, in parts of his poem, of glancing at majesty itself. He in general ridicules not persons, but things, not a party, but their principles, which may belong, as time and occasion serve, to one set of solemn pretenders or another. This he has done most effectually, in every possible way, and from every possible source, learned or unlearned. He has exhausted the moods and figures of satire and sophistry.[1] It would be possible to deduce the different forms of syllogism in Aristotle, from the different violations or mock-imitations of them in Butler. He fulfils every one of Barrow's conditions of wit, which I have enumerated in the first Lecture. He makes you laugh or smile by comparing the high to the low,[2] or by pretending to raise the low to the lofty;[3] he succeeds equally in the familiarity of his illustrations,[4] or their incredible extravagance,[5] by comparing things that are alike or not alike. He surprises equally

[1] 'And have not two saints power to use
A greater privilege than three Jews?'
* * * * *
'Her voice, the music of the spheres,
So loud it deafens mortals' ears,
As wise philosophers have thought,
And that's the cause we hear it not.'

[2] 'No Indian prince has to his palace
More followers than a thief to the gallows.'

[3] 'And in his nose, like Indian king,
He (Bruin) wore for ornament a ring.'

[4] 'Whose noise whets valour sharp, like beer
By thunder turned to vinegar.'

[5] 'Replete with strange hermetic powder,
That wounds nine miles point-blank would solder.'
* * * * * *
'His tawny beard was th' equal grace
Both of his wisdom and his face;
In cut and die so like a tile,
A sudden view it would beguile:
The upper part thereof was whey,
The nether orange mixed with grey.
This hairy meteor did denounce
The fall of sceptres and of crowns;
With grisly type did represent
Declining age of government;
And tell with hieroglyphic spade
Its own grave and the state's were made.'
* * * * *
'This sword a dagger had his page,
That was but little for his age;
And therefore waited on him so,
As dwarfs upon knight errants do.'

by his coincidences or contradictions, by spinning out a long-winded flimsy excuse, or by turning short upon you with the point-blank truth. His rhymes are as witty as his reasons, equally remote from what common custom would suggest;[1] and he startles you sometimes by an empty sound like a blow upon a drum-head,[2] by a pun upon one word,[3] and by splitting another in two at the end of a verse, with the same alertness and power over the odd and unaccountable in the combinations of sounds as of images.[4]

There are as many shrewd aphorisms in his works, clenched by as many quaint and individual allusions, as perhaps in any author whatever. He makes none but palpable hits, that may be said to give one's understanding a rap on the knuckles.[5] He is, indeed, sometimes too prolific, and spins his antithetical sentences out, one after another, till the reader, not the author, is wearied. He is, however, very seldom guilty of repetitions or wordy paraphrases of himself; but he sometimes comes rather too near it; and interrupts the thread of his argument (for narrative he has none) by a tissue of epigrams, and the tagging of points and conundrums without end. The fault, or original sin of his genius, is, that from too much leaven it ferments and runs over; and there is, unfortunately, nothing in his subject to restrain and keep it within compass. He has no story good for any thing; and his characters are good for very little. They are too low and mechanical, or too much one thing, personifications, as it were, of nicknames, and bugbears of popular prejudice and vulgar cant, unredeemed by any virtue, or difference or variety of disposition. There is no relaxation or shifting of the parts; and the impression in some degree fails of its effect, and becomes questionable from its being always the same. The satire looks, at length, almost like special-pleading: it has nothing to confirm it in

[1] 'And straight another with his flambeau,
Gave Ralpho o'er the eyes a damn'd blow.'
* * * * *
'That deals in destiny's dark counsels,
And sage opinions of the moon sells.'

[2] 'The mighty Tottipottimoy
Sent to our elders an envoy.'

[3] 'For Hebrew *roots*, although they're found
To flourish most in barren ground.'

[4] 'Those wholesale critics that in coffee-
Houses cry down all philosophy.'

[5] 'This we among ourselves may speak,
But to the wicked or the weak
We must be cautious to declare
Perfection-truths, such as these are.'

the apparent good humour or impartiality of the writer. It is something revolting to see an author persecute his characters, the cherished offspring of his brain, in this manner, without mercy. Hudibras and Ralpho have immortalised Butler; and what has he done for them in return, but set them up to be 'pilloried on infamy's high and lasting stage?' This is ungrateful!

The rest of the characters have, in general, little more than their names and professions to distinguish them. We scarcely know one from another, Cerdon, or Orsin, or Crowdero, and are often obliged to turn back, to connect their several adventures together. In fact, Butler drives only at a set of obnoxious opinions, and runs into general declamations. His poem in its essence is a satire, or didactic poem. It is not virtually dramatic, or narrative. It is composed of digressions by the author. He instantly breaks off in the middle of a story, or incident, to comment upon and turn it into ridicule. He does not give characters but topics, which would do just as well in his own mouth without agents, or machinery of any kind. The long digression in Part III. in which no mention is made of the hero, is just as good and as much an integrant part of the poem as the rest. The conclusion is lame and impotent, but that is saying nothing; the beginning and middle are equally so as to historical merit. There is no keeping in his characters, as in Don Quixote; nor any enjoyment of the ludicrousness of their situations, as in Hogarth. Indeed, it requires a considerable degree of sympathy to enter into and describe to the life even the ludicrous eccentricities of others, and there is no appearance of sympathy or liking to his subject in Butler. His humour is to his wit, 'as one grain of wheat in a bushel of chaff: you shall search all day, and when you find it, it is not worth the trouble.' Yet there are exceptions. The most decisive is, I think, the description of the battle between Bruin and his foes, Part I. Canto iii., and again of the triumphal procession in Part II. Canto ii. of which the principal features are copied in Hogarth's election print, the Chairing of the successful candidate. The account of Sidrophel and Whackum is another instance, and there are some few others, but rarely sprinkled up and down.[1]

[1] The following are nearly all I can remember.—

'Thus stopp'd their fury and the basting
Which towards Hudibras was hasting.'

It is said of the bear, in the fight with the dogs—

'And setting his right foot before,
He raised himself to shew how tall
His person was above them all.'

* * * * *

The widow, the termagant heroine of the poem, is still more disagreeable than her lover; and her sarcastic account of the passion of love, as consisting entirely in an attachment to land and houses, goods and chattels, which is enforced with all the rhetoric the author is master of, and hunted down through endless similes, is evidently false. The vulgarity and meanness of sentiment which Butler complains of in the Presbyterians, seems at last from long familiarity and close contemplation to have tainted his own mind. Their worst vices appear to have taken root in his imagination. Nothing but what was selfish and groveling sunk into his memory, in the depression of a menial situation under his supposed hero. He has, indeed, carried his private grudge too far into his general speculations. He even makes out the rebels to be cowards and well beaten, which does not accord with the history of the times. In an excess of zeal for church and state, he is too much disposed to treat religion as a cheat, and liberty as a farce. It was the cant of that day (from

'At this the knight grew high in chafe,
And staring furiously on Ralph,
He trembled and look'd pale with ire,
Like ashes first, then red as fire.'
* * * * *
'The knight himself did after ride,
Leading Crowdero by his side,
And tow'd him if he lagged behind,
Like boat against the tide and wind.'
* * * * *
'And rais'd upon his desperate foot,
On stirrup-side he gazed about.'
* * * * *
And Hudibras, who used to ponder
On such sights with judicious wonder.'
* * * * *

The beginning of the account of the procession in Part II. is as follows:--

'Both thought it was the wisest course
To wave the fight and mount to horse,
And to secure by swift retreating,
Themselves from danger of worse beating:
Yet neither of them would disparage
By uttering of his mind his courage.
Which made 'em stoutly keep their ground,
With horror and disdain wind-bound.
And now the cause of all their fear
By slow degrees approach'd so near,
They might distinguish different noise
Of horns and pans, and dogs and boys,
And kettle-drums, whose sullen dub
Sounds like the hooping of a tub.'

which he is not free) to cry down sanctity and sobriety as marks of disaffection, as it is the cant of this, to hold them up as proofs of loyalty and staunch monarchical principles. Religion and morality are, in either case, equally made subservient to the spirit of party, and a stalking-horse to the love of power. Finally, there is a want of pathos and humour, but no want of interest in Hudibras. It is difficult to lay it down. One thought is inserted into another; the links in the chain of reasoning are so closely rivetted, that the attention seldom flags, but is kept alive (without any other assistance) by the mere force of writing. There are occasional indications of poetical fancy, and an eye for natural beauty; but these are kept under or soon discarded, judiciously enough, but it should seem, not for lack of power, for they are certainly as masterly as they are rare. Such are the burlesque description of the stocks, or allegorical prison, in which first Crowdero, and then Hudibras, is confined: the passage beginning—

'As when an owl that 's in a barn,
Sees a mouse creeping in the corn,
Sits still and shuts his round blue eyes,
As if he slept,' &c.

And the description of the moon going down in the early morning, which is as pure, original, and picturesque as possible:—

'The queen of night, whose large command
Rules all the sea and half the land,
And over moist and crazy brains
In high spring-tides at midnight reigns,
Was now declining to the west,
To go to bed and take her rest.'

Butler is sometimes scholastic, but he makes his learning tell to good account; and for the purposes of burlesque, nothing can be better fitted than the scholastic style.

Butler's Remains are nearly as good and full of sterling genius as his principal poem. Take the following ridicule of the plan of the Greek tragedies as an instance.

—'Reduce all tragedy, by rules of art,
Back to its ancient theatre, a cart,
And make them henceforth keep the beaten roads
Of reverend choruses and episodes;
Reform and regulate a puppet-play,
According to the true and ancient way;
That not an actor shall presume to squeak,
Unless he have a license for 't in Greek:

Nor devil in the puppet-play be allowed
To roar and spit fire, but to fright the crowd,
Unless some god or demon chance to have piques
Against an ancient family of Greeks;
That other men may tremble and take warning
How such a fatal progeny they 're born in;
For none but such for tragedy are fitted,
That have been ruined only to be pitied:
And only those held proper to deter,
Who have th' ill luck against their wills to err;
Whence only such as are of middling sizes,
Betwixt morality and venial vices,
Are qualified to be destroyed by fate,
For other mortals to take warning at.'

Upon Critics.

His ridicule of Milton's Latin style is equally severe, but not so well founded.

I have only to add a few words respecting the dramatic writers about this time, before we arrive at the golden period of our comedy. Those of Etherege[1] are good for nothing, except The Man of Mode, or Sir Fopling Flutter, which is, I think, a more exquisite and airy picture of the manners of that age than any other extant. Sir Fopling himself is an inimitable coxcomb, but pleasant withal. He is a suit of clothes personified. Dorimant (supposed to be Lord Rochester) is the genius of grace, gallantry, and gaiety. The women in this courtly play have very much the look and air (but something more demure and significant) of Sir Peter Lely's beauties. Harriet, the mistress of Dorimant, who 'tames his wild heart to her loving hand,' is the flower of the piece. Her natural, untutored grace and spirit, her meeting with Dorimant in the Park, bowing and mimicking him, and the luxuriant description which is given of her fine person, altogether form one of the *chef d'œuvres* of dramatic painting. I should think this comedy would bear reviving; and if Mr. Liston were to play Sir Fopling, the part would shine out with double lustre, 'like the morn risen on mid-noon.'—Dryden's comedies have all the point that there is in ribaldry, and all the humour that there is in extravagance. I am sorry I can say nothing better of them. He was not at home in this kind of writing, of which he was himself conscious. His play was *horse-play*. His wit (what there is of it) is ingenious and scholar-like, rather than natural and dramatic. Thus Burr, in the Wild Gallant, says to Failer, 'She shall sooner cut an atom than part us.'—His plots are pure *voluntaries* in absurdity,

[1] Love in a Tub, and She Would if She Could.

that bend and shift to his purpose without any previous notice or reason, and are governed by final causes. Sir Martin Mar-all, which was taken from the Duchess of Newcastle, is the best of his plays, and the origin of the Busy Body. Otway's comedies do no sort of credit to him: on the contrary, they are as desperate as his fortunes. The Duke of Buckingham's famous Rehearsal, which has made, and deservedly, so much noise in the world, is in a great measure taken from Beaumont and Fletcher's Knight of the Burning Pestle, which was written in ridicule of the London apprentices in the reign of Elizabeth, who had a great hand in the critical decisions of that age. There were other dramatic writers of this period, noble and plebeian. I shall only mention one other piece, the Committee, I believe by Sir Robert Howard, which has of late been cut down into the farce called Honest Thieves, and which I remember reading with a great deal of pleasure many years ago.

One cause of the difference between the immediate reception and lasting success of dramatic works at this period may be, that after the court took the play-houses under its particular protection, every thing became very much an affair of private patronage. If an author could get a learned lord or a countess-dowager to bespeak a box at his play, and applaud the doubtful passages, he considered his business as done. On the other hand, there was a reciprocity between men of letters and their patrons; critics were 'mitigated into courtiers, and submitted,' as Mr. Burke has it, 'to the soft collar of social esteem,' in pronouncing sentence on the works of lords and ladies. How ridiculous this seems now! What a hubbub it would create, if it were known that a particular person of fashion and title had taken a front-box in order to decide on the fate of a first play! How the newspaper critics would laugh in their sleeves! How the public would sneer! But at this time there was no public. I will not say, therefore, that these times are better than those; but they are better, I think, in this respect. An author now-a-days no longer hangs dangling on the frown of a lord, or the smile of a lady of quality (the one governed perhaps by his valet, and the other by her waiting-maid), but throws himself boldly, making a lover's leap of it, into the broad lap of public opinion, on which he falls like a feather-bed; and which, like the great bed of Ware, is wide enough to hold us all very comfortably!

LECTURES ON THE COMIC WRITERS

LECTURE IV

ON WYCHERLEY, CONGREVE, VANBRUGH, AND FARQUHAR

COMEDY is a 'graceful ornament to the civil order; the Corinthian capital of polished society.' Like the mirrors which have been added to the sides of one of our theatres, it reflects the images of grace, of gaiety, and pleasure double, and completes the perspective of human life. To read a good comedy is to keep the best company in the world, where the best things are said, and the most amusing happen. The wittiest remarks are always ready on the tongue, and the luckiest occasions are always at hand to give birth to the happiest conceptions. Sense makes strange havoc of nonsense. Refinement acts as a foil to affectation, and affectation to ignorance. Sentence after sentence tells. We don't know which to admire most, the observation, or the answer to it. We would give our fingers to be able to talk so ourselves, or to hear others talk so. In turning over the pages of the best comedies, we are almost transported to another world, and escape from this dull age to one that was all life, and whim, and mirth, and humour. The curtain rises, and a gayer scene presents itself, as on the canvass of Watteau. We are admitted behind the scenes like spectators at court, on a levee or birth-day; but it is the court, the gala day of wit and pleasure, of gallantry and Charles II! What an air breathes from the name! what a rustling of silks and waving of plumes! what a sparkling of diamond ear-rings and shoe-buckles! What bright eyes, (ah, those were Waller's Sacharissa's as she passed!) what killing looks and graceful motions! How the faces of the whole ring are dressed in smiles! how the repartee goes round! how wit and folly, elegance and awkward imitation of it, set one another off! Happy, thoughtless age, when kings and nobles led purely ornamental lives; when the utmost stretch of a morning's study went no farther than the choice of a sword-knot, or the adjustment of a side-curl; when the soul spoke out in all the pleasing eloquence of dress; and beaux and belles, enamoured of themselves in one another's follies, fluttered like gilded butterflies, in giddy mazes, through the walks of St. James's Park!

The four principal writers of this style of comedy (which I think the best) are undoubtedly Wycherley, Congreve, Vanbrugh, and Farquhar. The dawn was in Etherege, as its latest close was in Sheridan.—It is hard to say which of these four is best, or in what each of them excels, they had so many and such great excellences.

Congreve is the most distinct from the others, and the most easily defined, both from what he possessed, and from what he wanted. He had by far the most wit and elegance, with less of other things, of humour, character, incident, &c. His style is inimitable, nay perfect. It is the highest model of comic dialogue. Every sentence is replete with sense and satire, conveyed in the most polished and pointed terms. Every page presents a shower of brilliant conceits, is a tissue of epigrams in prose, is a new triumph of wit, a new conquest over dulness. The fire of artful raillery is nowhere else so well kept up. This style, which he was almost the first to introduce, and which he carried to the utmost pitch of classical refinement, reminds one exactly of Collins's description of wit as opposed to humour,

> 'Whose jewels in his crisped hair
> Are placed each other's light to share.'

Sheridan will not bear a comparison with him in the regular antithetical construction of his sentences, and in the mechanical artifices of his style, though so much later, and though style in general has been so much studied, and in the mechanical part so much improved since then. It bears every mark of being what he himself in the dedication of one of his plays tells us that it was, a spirited copy taken off and carefully revised from the most select society of his time, exhibiting all the sprightliness, ease, and animation of familiar conversation, with the correctness and delicacy of the most finished composition. His works are a singular treat to those who have cultivated a taste for the niceties of English style: there is a peculiar flavour in the very words, which is to be found in hardly any other writer. To the mere reader his writings would be an irreparable loss: to the stage they are already become a dead letter, with the exception of one of them, Love for Love. This play is as full of character, incident, and stage-effect, as almost any of those of his contemporaries, and fuller of wit than any of his own, except perhaps the Way of the World. It still acts, and is still acted well. The effect of it is prodigious on the well-informed spectator. In particular, Munden's Foresight, if it is not just the thing, is a wonderfully rich and powerful piece of comic acting. His look is planet-struck; his dress and appearance like one of the signs of the Zodiac taken down. Nothing can be more bewildered; and it only wants a little more helplessness, a little more of the doating querulous garrulity of age, to be all that one conceives of the superannuated, star-gazing original. The gay, unconcerned opening of this play, and the romantic generosity of the conclusion, where

Valentine, when about to resign his mistress, declares—'I never valued fortune, but as it was subservient to my pleasure; and my only pleasure was to please this lady,'—are alike admirable. The peremptory bluntness and exaggerated descriptions of Sir Sampson Legend are in a vein truly oriental, with a Shakespearian cast of language, and form a striking contrast to the quaint credulity and senseless superstitions of Foresight. The remonstrance of his son to him, 'to divest him, along with his inheritance, of his reason, thoughts, passions, inclinations, affections, appetites, senses, and the huge train of attendants which he brought into the world with him,' with his valet's accompanying comments, is one of the most eloquent and spirited specimens of wit, pathos, and morality, that is to be found. The short scene with Trapland, the money-broker, is of the first water. What a picture is here drawn of Tattle! 'More misfortunes, Sir!' says Jeremy. *Valentine.* 'What, another dun?' *Jeremy.* 'No, Sir, but Mr. Tattle is come to wait upon you.' What an introduction to give of an honest gentleman in the shape of a misfortune! The scenes between him, Miss Prue, and Ben, are of a highly coloured description. Mrs. Frail and Mrs. Foresight are 'sisters every way;' and the bodkin which Mrs. Foresight brings as a proof of her sister's levity of conduct, and which is so convincingly turned against her as a demonstration of her own—'Nay, if you come to that, where did you find that bodkin?'—is one of the trophies of the moral justice of the comic drama. The Old Bachelor and Double Dealer are inferior to Love for Love, but one is never tired of reading them. The fault of the last is, that Lady Touchwood approaches, in the turbulent impetuosity of her character, and measured tone of her declamation, too near to the tragedy-queen; and that Maskwell's plots puzzle the brain by their intricacy, as they stagger our belief by their gratuitous villainy. Sir Paul and Lady Pliant, and my Lord and Lady Froth, are also scarcely credible in the extravagant insipidity and romantic vein of their follies, in which they are notably seconded by the lively Mr. Brisk and 'dying Ned Careless.'

The Way of the World was the author's last and most carefully finished performance. It is an essence almost too fine; and the sense of pleasure evaporates in an aspiration after something that seems too exquisite ever to have been realised. After inhaling the spirit of Congreve's wit, and tasting 'love's thrice repured nectar' in his works, the head grows giddy in turning from the highest point of rapture to the ordinary business of life; and we can with difficulty recal the truant Fancy to those objects which we are fain to take up with here, *for better, for worse.* What can be more

enchanting than Millamant and her morning thoughts, her *doux sommeils*? What more provoking than her reproach to her lover, who proposes to rise early, 'Ah! idle creature!' The meeting of these two lovers after the abrupt dismissal of Sir Wilful, is the height of careless and voluptuous elegance, as if they moved in air, and drank a finer spirit of humanity.

> '*Millamant.* Like Phœbus sung the no less amorous boy.
> *Mirabell.* Like Daphne she, as lovely and as coy.'

Millamant is the perfect model of the accomplished fine lady:

> 'Come, then, the colours and the ground prepare,
> Dip in the rainbow, trick her off in air;
> Choose a firm cloud, before it falls, and in it
> Catch ere she change, the Cynthia of a minute.'

She is the ideal heroine of the comedy of high life, who arrives at the height of indifference to every thing from the height of satisfaction; to whom pleasure is as familiar as the air she draws; elegance worn as a part of her dress; wit the habitual language which she hears and speaks; love, a matter of course; and who has nothing to hope or to fear, her own caprice being the only law to herself, and rule to those about her. Her words seem composed of amorous sighs—her looks are glanced at prostrate admirers or envious rivals.

> 'If there's delight in love, 'tis when I see
> That heart that others bleed for, bleed for me.'

She refines on her pleasures to satiety; and is almost stifled in the incense that is offered to her person, her wit, her beauty, and her fortune. Secure of triumph, her slaves tremble at her frown: her charms are so irresistible, that her conquests give her neither surprise nor concern. 'Beauty the lover's gift?' she exclaims, in answer to Mirabell—'Dear me, what is a lover that it can give? Why one makes lovers as fast as one pleases, and they live as long as one pleases, and they die as soon as one pleases; and then if one pleases, one makes more.' We are not sorry to see her tamed down at last, from her pride of love and beauty, into a wife. She is good-natured and generous, with all her temptations to the contrary; and her behaviour to Mirabell reconciles us to her treatment of Witwoud and Petulant, and of her country admirer, Sir Wilful.

Congreve has described all this in his character of Millamant, but he has done no more; and if he had, he would have done wrong. He has given us the finest idea of an artificial character of this kind; but it is still the reflection of an artificial character. The springs of nature, passion, or imagination are but feebly touched. The

impressions appealed to, and with masterly address, are habitual, external, and conventional advantages: the ideas of birth, of fortune, of connexions, of dress, accomplishment, fashion, the opinion of the world, of crowds of admirers, continually come into play, flatter our vanity, bribe our interest, soothe our indolence, fall in with our prejudices;—it is these that support the goddess of our idolatry, with which she is every thing, and without which she would be nothing. The mere fine lady of comedy, compared with the heroine of romance or poetry, when stripped of her adventitious ornaments and advantages, is too much like the doll stripped of its finery. In thinking of Millamant, we think almost as much of her dress as of her person: it is not so with respect to Rosalind or Perdita. The poet has painted them differently; in colours which 'nature's own sweet and cunning hand laid on,' with health, with innocence, with gaiety, 'wild wit, invention ever new;' with pure red and white, like the wilding's blossoms; with warbled wood-notes, like the feathered choir's; with thoughts fluttering on the wings of imagination, and hearts panting and breathless with eager delight. The interest we feel is in themselves; the admiration they excite is for themselves. They do not depend upon the drapery of circumstances. It is nature that 'blazons herself' in them. Imogen is the same in a lonely cave as in a court; nay more, for she there seems something heavenly—a spirit or a vision; and, as it were, shames her destiny, brighter for the foil of circumstances. Millamant is nothing but a fine lady; and all her airs and affectation would be blown away with the first breath of misfortune. Enviable in drawing-rooms, adorable at her toilette, fashion, like a witch, has thrown its spell around her; but if that spell were broken, her power of fascination would be gone. For that reason I think the character better adapted for the stage: it is more artificial, more theatrical, more meretricious. I would rather have seen Mrs. Abington's Millamant, than any Rosalind that ever appeared on the stage. Some how, this sort of acquired elegance is more a thing of costume, of air and manner; and in comedy, or on the comic stage, the light and familiar, the trifling, superficial, and agreeable, bears, perhaps, rightful sway over that which touches the affections, or exhausts the fancy.—There is a callousness in the worst characters in the Way of the World, in Fainall, and his wife and Mrs. Marwood, not very pleasant; and a grossness in the absurd ones, such as Lady Wishfort and Sir Wilful, which is not a little amusing. Witwoud wishes to declaim, as far as he can, his relationship to this last character, and says, 'he 's but his half-brother;' to which Mirabell makes answer—'Then, perhaps, he 's but half a fool.' Peg is an admirable caricature

of rustic awkwardness and simplicity, which is carried to excess without any offence, from a sense of contrast to the refinement of the chief characters in the play. The description of Lady Wishfort's face is a perfect piece of painting. The force of style in this author at times amounts to poetry. Waitwell, who personates Sir Rowland, and Foible, his accomplice in the matrimonial scheme upon her mistress, hang as a dead weight upon the plot. They are mere tools in the hands of Mirabell, and want life and interest. Congreve's characters can all of them speak well, they are mere machines when they come to act. Our author's superiority deserted him almost entirely with his wit. His serious and tragic poetry is frigid and jejune to an unaccountable degree. His *forte* was the description of actual manners, whether elegant or absurd; and when he could not deride the one or embellish the other, his attempts at romantic passion or imaginary enthusiasm are forced, abortive, and ridiculous, or common-place. The description of the ruins of a temple in the beginning of the Mourning Bride, was a great stretch of his poetic genius. It has, however, been over-rated, particularly by Dr. Johnson, who could have done nearly as well himself for a single passage in the same style of moralising and sentimental description. To justify this general censure, and to shew how the lightest and most graceful wit degenerates into the heaviest and most bombastic poetry, I will give one description out of his tragedy, which will be enough. It is the speech which Gonsalez addresses to Almeria:

'Be every day of your long life like this.
The sun, bright conquest, and your brighter eyes
Have all conspired to blaze promiscuous light,
And bless this day with most unequal lustre.
Your royal father, my victorious lord,
Loaden with spoils, and ever-living laurel,
Is entering now, in martial pomp, the palace.
Five hundred mules precede his solemn march,
Which groan beneath the weight of Moorish wealth.
Chariots of war, adorn'd with glittering gems,
Succeed; and next, a hundred neighing steeds,
White as the fleecy rain on Alpine hills;
That bound, and foam, and champ the golden bit,
As they disdain'd the victory they grace.
Prisoners of war in shining fetters follow:
And captains of the noblest blood of Afric
Sweat by his chariot-wheels, and lick and grind,
With gnashing teeth, the dust his triumphs raise.
The swarming populace spread every wall,
And cling, as if with claws they did enforce

Their hold, through clifted stones stretching and staring
As if they were all eyes, and every limb
Would feed its faculty of admiration,
While you alone retire, and shun this sight;
This sight, which is indeed not seen (though twice
The multitude should gaze) in absence of your eyes.'

This passage seems, in part, an imitation of Bolingbroke's entry into London. The style is as different from Shakspeare, as it is from that of Witwoud and Petulant. It is plain that the imagination of the author could not raise itself above the burlesque. His Mask of Semele, Judgment of Paris, and other occasional poems, are even worse. I would not advise any one to read them, or if I did, they would not.

Wycherley was before Congreve; and his Country Wife will last longer than any thing of Congreve's as a popular acting play. It is only a pity that it is not entirely his own; but it is enough so to do him never-ceasing honour, for the best things are his own. His humour is, in general, broader, his characters more natural, and his incidents more striking than Congreve's. It may be said of Congreve, that the workmanship overlays the materials: in Wycherley, the casting of the parts and the fable are alone sufficient to ensure success. We forget Congreve's characters, and only remember what they say: we remember Wycherley's characters, and the incidents they meet with, just as if they were real, and forget what they say, comparatively speaking. Miss Peggy (or Mrs. Margery Pinchwife) is a character that will last for ever, I should hope; and even when the original is no more, if that should ever be, while self-will, curiosity, art, and ignorance are to be found in the same person, it will be just as good and as intelligible as ever in the description, because it is built on first principles, and brought out in the fullest and broadest manner. Agnes, in Moliere's play, has a great deal of the same unconscious impulse and heedless *naïveté*, but hers is sentimentalised and varnished over (in the French fashion) with long-winded apologies and analytical distinctions. It wants the same simple force and *home* truth. It is not so direct and downright. Miss Peggy is not even a novice in casuistry: she blurts out her meaning before she knows what she is saying, and she speaks her mind by her actions oftener than by her words. The outline of the plot is the same; but the point-blank hits and master-strokes, the sudden thoughts and delightful expedients, such as her changing the letters, the meeting her husband plump in the Park, as she is running away from him as fast as her heels can carry her, her being turned out of doors by her jealous booby of a husband, and sent by him to her lover disguised as Alicia, her sister-

in-law—occur first in the modern play. There are scarcely any incidents or situations on the stage, which tell like these for pantomimic effect, which give such a tingling to the blood, or so completely take away the breath with expectation and surprise. Miss Prue, in Love for Love, is a lively reflection of Miss Peggy, but without the bottom and weight of metal. Hoyden is a match for her in constitution and complete effect, as Corinna, in the Confederacy, is in mischief, but without the wit. Mrs. Jordan used to play all these characters; and as she played them, it was hard to know which was best. Pinchwife, or Moody, (as he is at present called) is, like others of Wycherley's moral characters, too rustic, abrupt, and cynical. He is a more disagreeable, but less tedious character than the husband of Agnes, and both seem, by all accounts, to have been rightly served. The character of Sparkish is quite new, and admirably hit off. He is an exquisite and suffocating coxcomb; a pretender to wit and letters, without common understanding, or the use of his senses. The class of character is thoroughly exposed and understood; but he persists in his absurd conduct so far, that it becomes extravagant and disgusting, if not incredible, from mere weakness and foppery. Yet there is something in him that we are inclined to tolerate at first, as his professing that 'with him a wit is the first title to respect;' and we regard his unwillingness to be pushed out of the room, and coming back, in spite of their teeth, to keep the company of wits and raillers, as a favourable omen. But he utterly disgraces his pretensions before he has done. With all his faults and absurdities, he is, however, a much less offensive character than Tattle.—Horner is a stretch of probability in the first concoction of that ambiguous character, (for he does not appear at present on the stage as Wycherley made him) but notwithstanding the indecency and indirectness of the means he employs to carry his plans into effect, he deserves every sort of consideration and forgiveness, both for the display of his own ingenuity, and the deep insight he discovers into human nature—such as it was in the time of Wycherley. The author has commented on this character, and the double meaning of the name in his Plain Dealer, borrowing the remarks, and almost the very words of Moliere, who has brought forward and defended his own work against the objections of the precise part of his audience, in his *Critique de l'Ecole des Femmes*. There is no great harm in these occasional plagiarisms, except that they make one uncomfortable at other times, and distrustful of the originality of the whole.—The Plain Dealer is Wycherley's next best work; and is a most severe and poignant moral satire, There is a heaviness about it, indeed, an extravagance, an overdoing both in the style, the plot, and characters,

but the truth of feeling and the force of interest prevail over every objection. The character of Manly, the Plain Dealer, is violent, repulsive, and uncouth, which is a fault, though one that seems to have been intended for the sake of contrast; for the portrait of consummate, artful hypocrisy in Olivia, is, perhaps, rendered more striking by it. The indignation excited against this odious and pernicious quality by the masterly exposure to which it is here subjected, is 'a discipline of humanity.' No one can read this play attentively without being the better for it as long as he lives. It penetrates to the core; it shews the immorality and hateful effects of duplicity, by shewing it fixing its harpy fangs in the heart of an honest and worthy man. It is worth ten volumes of sermons. The scenes between Manly after his return, Olivia, Plausible, and Novel, are instructive examples of unblushing impudence, of shallow pretensions to principle, and of the most mortifying reflections on his own situation, and bitter sense of female injustice and ingratitude, on the part of Manly. The devil of hypocrisy and hardened assurance seems worked up to the highest pitch of conceivable effrontery in Olivia, when, after confiding to her cousin the story of her infamy, she, in a moment, turns round upon her for some sudden purpose, and affecting not to know the meaning of the other's allusions to what she has just told her, reproaches her with forging insinuations to the prejudice of her character, and in violation of their friendship. 'Go! you're a censorious ill woman.' This is more trying to the patience than any thing in the Tartuffe. The name of this heroine, and her overtures to Fidelia, as the page, seem to have been suggested by Twelfth Night. It is curious to see how the same subject is treated by two such different authors as Shakspeare and Wycherley. The widow Blackacre and her son are like her lawsuit—everlasting. A more lively, palpable, bustling, ridiculous picture cannot be drawn. Jerry is a hopeful lad, though undutiful and gets out of bad hands into worse. Goldsmith evidently had an eye to these two precious characters, in She Stoops to Conquer. Tony Lumpkin and his mother are of the same family, and the incident of the theft of the casket of jewels, and the bag of parchments, is nearly the same in both authors. Wycherley's other plays are not so good. The Gentleman Dancing Master is a long, foolish farce, in the exaggerated manner of Moliere, but without his spirit or whimsical invention. Love in a Wood, though not what one would wish it to be for the author's sake or our own, is much better, and abounds in several rich and highly-coloured scenes, particularly those in which Miss Lucy, her mother Crossbite, Dapperwit, and Alderman Gripe are concerned. Some of the subordinate characters and intrigues in this comedy are grievously

spun out. Wycherley, when he got hold of a good thing, or sometimes even of a bad one, was determined to make the most of it; and might have said with Dogberry, truly enough, 'Had I the tediousness of a king, I could find in my heart to bestow it all upon your worships.' In reading this author's best works, those which one reads most frequently over, and knows almost by heart, one cannot help thinking of the treatment he received from Pope about his verses. It was hardly excusable in a boy of sixteen to an old man of seventy.

Vanbrugh comes next, and holds his own fully with the best. He is no writer at all, as to mere authorship; but he makes up for it by a prodigious fund of comic invention and ludicrous description, bordering somewhat on caricature. Though he did not borrow from him, he was much more like Moliere in genius than Wycherley was, who professedly imitated him. He has none of Congreve's graceful refinement, and as little of Wycherley's serious manner and studied insight into the springs of character; but his exhibition of it in dramatic contrast and unlooked-for situations, where the different parties play upon one another's failings, and into one another's hands, keeping up the jest like a game at battledore and shuttlecock, and urging it to the utmost verge of breathless extravagance, in the mere eagerness of the fray, is beyond that of any other of our writers. His fable is not so profoundly laid, nor his characters so well digested as Wycherley's (who, in these respects, bore some resemblance to Fielding). Vanbrugh does not lay the same deliberate train from the outset to the conclusion, so that the whole may hang together, and tend inevitably from the combination of different agents and circumstances to the same decisive point: but he works out scene after scene, on the spur of the occasion, and from the immediate hold they take of his imagination at the moment, without any previous bias or ultimate purpose, much more powerfully, with more *verve*, and in a richer vein of original invention. His fancy warms and burnishes out as if he were engaged in the real scene of action, and felt all his faculties suddenly called forth to meet the emergency. He has more nature than art: what he does best, he does because he cannot help it. He has a masterly eye to the advantages which certain accidental situations of character present to him on the spot, and he executes the most difficult and rapid theatrical movements at a moment's warning. Of this kind are the inimitable scenes in the Provoked Wife, between Razor and Mademoiselle, where they repeat and act over again the rencontre in the Mulberry-walk between Constant and his mistress, than which nothing was ever more happily conceived, or done to more absolute perfection; that again in the Relapse, where Loveless pushes

Berinthia into the closet; the sudden meeting in the Confederacy between Dick and Mrs. Amlet; the altercation about the letter between Flippanta and Corinna, in the same play, and that again where Brass, at the house of Gripe the money-scrivener, threatens to discover his friend and accomplice, and by talking louder and louder to him, as he tries to evade his demands, extorts a grudging submission from him. This last scene is as follows:—

'*Dick.* I wish my old hobbling mother han't been blabbing something here she should not do.

Brass. Fear nothing, all's safe on that side yet. But how speaks young mistress's epistle? soft and tender?

Dick. As pen can write.

Brass. So you think all goes well there?

Dick. As my heart can wish.

Brass. You are sure on 't?

Dick. Sure on 't!

Brass. Why then, ceremony aside—[*Putting on his hat*]—you and I must have a little talk, Mr. Amlet.

Dick. Ah, Brass, what art thou going to do? wo 't ruin me?

Brass. Look you, Dick, few words; you are in a smooth way of making your fortune; I hope all will roll on. But how do you intend matters shall pass 'twixt you and me in this business?

Dick. Death and furies! What a time does take to talk on 't?

Brass. Good words, or I betray you; they have already heard of one Mr. Amlet in the house.

Dick. Here 's a son of a whore. [*Aside.*

Brass. In short, look smooth, and be a good prince. I am your valet, 'tis true: your footman, sometimes, which I 'm enraged at; but you have always had the ascendant I confess: when we were schoolfellows, you made me carry your books, make your exercise, own your rogueries, and sometimes take a whipping for you. When we were fellow-'prentices, though I was your senior, you made me open the shop, clean my master's shoes, cut last at dinner, and eat all the crust. In our sins too, I must own you still kept me under; you soar'd up to adultery with the mistress, while I was at humble fornication with the maid. Nay, in our punishments you still made good your post; for when once upon a time I was sentenced but to be whipp'd, I cannot deny but you were condemn'd to be hang'd. So that in all times, I must confess, your inclinations have been greater and nobler than mine; however, I cannot consent that you should at once fix fortune for life, and I dwell in my humilities for the rest of my days.

Dick. Hark thee, Brass, if I do not most nobly by thee, I 'm a dog.

Brass. And when?

Dick. As soon as ever I am married.

Brass. Ay, the plague take thee.

Dick. Then you mistrust me?

Brass. I do, by my faith. Look you, Sir, some folks we mistrust,

because we don't know them: others we mistrust, because we do know them: and for one of these reasons I desire there may be a bargain beforehand: if not [*raising his voice*] look ye, Dick Amlet—

Dick. Soft, my dear friend and companion. The dog will ruin me [*Aside*]. Say, what is 't will content thee?

Brass. O ho!

Dick. But how canst thou be such a barbarian?

Brass. I learnt it at Algiers.

Dick. Come, make thy Turkish demand then.

Brass. You know you gave me a bank-bill this morning to receive foi you.

Dick. I did so, of fifty pounds; 'tis thine. So, now thou art satisfied all is fixed.

Brass. It is not indeed. There's a diamond necklace you robb'd your mother of e'en now.

Dick. Ah, you Jew!

Brass. No words.

Dick. My dear Brass!

Brass. I insist.

Dick. My old friend!

Brass. Dick Amlet [*raising his voice*] I insist.

Dick. Ah, the cormorant [*Aside*].—Well, 'tis thine: thou'lt never thrive with it.

Brass. When I find it begins to do me mischief, I'll give it you again. But I must have a wedding suit.

Dick. Well.

Brass. A stock of linen.

Dick. Enough.

Brass. Not yet——a silver-hilted sword.

Dick. Well, thou shalt have that too. Now thou hast every thing.

Brass. Heav'n forgive me, I forgot a ring of remembrance. I would not forget all these favours for the world: a sparkling diamond will be always playing in my eye, and put me in mind of them.

Dick. This unconscionable rogue! [*Aside*]—Well, I'll bespeak one for thee.

Brass. Brilliant.

Dick. It shall. But if the thing don't succeed after all—

Brass. I am a man of honour and restore: and so, the treaty being finish'd, I strike my flag of defiance, and fall into my respects again.'

[*Takes off his hat.*

The Confederacy is a comedy of infinite contrivance and intrigue, with a matchless spirit of impudence. It is a fine careless *exposé* of heartless want of principle: for there is no anger or severity against vice expressed in it, as in Wycherley. The author's morality in all cases (except his Provoked Wife, which was undertaken as a penance for past peccadillos) sits very loose upon him. It is a little upon the turn; 'it does somewhat smack.' Old Palmer, as Dick Amlet,

asking his mother's blessing on his knee, was the very idea of a graceless son.—His sweetheart Corinna is a Miss Prue, but nature works in her more powerfully.—Lord Foppington, in the Relapse, is a most splendid caricature: he is a personification of the foppery and folly of dress and external appearance in full feather. He blazes out and dazzles sober reason with ridiculous ostentation. Still I think this character is a copy from Etherege's Sir Fopling Flutter, and upon the whole, perhaps, Sir Fopling is the more natural grotesque of the two. His soul is more in his dress; he is a more disinterested coxcomb. The lord is an ostentatious, strutting, vain-glorious blockhead: the knight is an unaffected, self-complacent, serious admirer of his equipage and person. For instance, what they severally say on the subject of contemplating themselves in the glass, is a proof of this. Sir Fopling thinks a looking-glass in the room 'the best company in the world;' it is another self to him: Lord Foppington merely considers it as necessary to adjust his appearance, that he may make a figure in company. The finery of the one has an imposing air of grandeur about it, and is studied for effect: the other is really in love with a laced suit, and is hand and glove with the newest-cut fashion. He really thinks his tailor or peruke-maker the greatest man in the world, while his lordship treats them familiarly as necessary appendages of his person. Still this coxcomb-nobleman's effeminacy and mock-heroic vanity are admirably depicted, and held up to unrivalled ridicule; and his courtship of Miss Hoyden is excellent in all its stages, and ends oracularly.

Lord Foppington.—'Now, for my part, I think the wisest thing a man can do with an aching heart, is to put on a serene countenance; for a philosophical air is the most becoming thing in the world to the face of a person of quality: I will therefore bear my disgrace like a great man, and let the people see I am above an affront. [*then turning to his brother*] Dear Tam, since things are thus fallen out, pr'ythee give me leave to wish thee joy, I do it *de bon cœur*, strike me dumb: you have married a woman beautiful in her person, charming in her airs, prudent in her conduct, constant in her inclinations, and of a nice morality—stap my vitals!'

Poor Hoyden fares ill in his lordship's description of her, though she could expect no better at his hands for her desertion of him. She wants sentiment, to be sure, but she has other qualifications—she is a fine bouncing piece of flesh and blood. Her first announcement is decisive—'Let loose the greyhound, and lock up Hoyden.' Her declaration, 'It 's well they 've got me a husband, or ecod, I 'd marry the baker,' comes from her mouth like a shot from a culverin, and leaves no doubt, by its effect upon the ear, that she would have made

it good in the sequel, if she had not been provided for. Her indifference to the man she is to marry, and her attachment to the finery and the title, are justified by an attentive observation of nature in its simplest guise. There is, however, no harm in Hoyden; she merely wishes to consult her own inclination: she is by no means like Corinna in the Confederacy, 'a devilish girl at the bottom,' nor is it her great delight to plague other people.—Sir Tunbelly Clumsy is the right worshipful and worthy father of so delicate an offspring. He is a coarse, substantial contrast to the flippant and flimsy Lord Foppington. If the one is not without reason 'proud to be at the head of so prevailing a party' as that of coxcombs, the other may look big and console himself (under some affronts) with being a very competent representative, a knight of the shire, of the once formidable, though now obsolete class of country squires, who had no idea beyond the boundaries of their own estates, or the circumference of their own persons. His unwieldy dulness gives, by the rule of contraries, a lively sense of lightness and grace: his stupidity answers all the purposes of wit. His portly paunch repels a jest like a woolsack: a sarcasm rebounds from him like a ball. His presence is a cure for gravity; and he is a standing satire upon himself and the class in natural history to which he belonged.—Sir John Brute, in the Provoked Wife, is an animal of the same English growth, but of a cross-grained breed. He has a spice of the demon mixed up with the brute; is mischievous as well as stupid; has improved his natural parts by a town education and example; opposes the fine-lady airs and graces of his wife by brawling oaths, impenetrable surliness, and pot-house valour; overpowers any tendency she might have to vapours or hysterics, by the fumes of tobacco and strong beer; and thinks to be master in his own house by roaring in taverns, reeling home drunk every night, breaking lamps, and beating the watch. He does not, however, find this lordly method answer. He turns out to be a coward as well as a bully, and dares not resent the injuries he has provoked by his unmanly behaviour. This was Garrick's favourite part; and I have heard that his acting in the drunken scene, in which he was disguised not as a clergyman, but as a woman of the town, which was an alteration of his own to suit the delicacy of the times, was irresistible. The ironical conversations in this play between Belinda and Lady Brute, as well as those in the Relapse between Amanda and her cousin Berinthia, will do to compare with Congreve in the way of wit and studied raillery, but they will not stand the comparison. Araminta and Clarissa keep up the ball between them with more spirit, for their conversation is very like that of kept-mistresses; and the mixture of fashionable *slang* and

professed want of principle gives a sort of zest and high seasoning to their confidential communications, which Vanbrugh could supply as well as any body. But he could not do without the taint of grossness and licentiousness. Lady Townly is not the really vicious character, nor quite the fine lady, which the author would have her to be. Lady Grace is so far better; she is what she pretends to be, merely *sober* and insipid.—Vanbrugh's *forte* was not the sentimental or didactic; his genius flags and grows dull when it is not put into action, and wants the stimulus of sudden emergency, or the fortuitous collision of different motives, to call out all its force and vivacity. His antitheses are happy and brilliant contrasts of character; his *double entendres* equivocal situations; his best jokes are practical devices, not epigrammatic conceits. His wit is that which is emphatically called *mother-wit*. It brings those who possess it, or to whom he lends it, into scrapes by its restlessness, and brings them out of them by its alacrity. Several of his favourite characters are knavish, adroit adventurers, who have all the gipsy jargon, the cunning impudence, cool presence of mind, selfishness, and indefatigable industry; all the excuses, lying, dexterity, the intellectual juggling and legerdemain tricks, necessary to fit them for this sort of predatory warfare on the simplicity, follies, or vices of mankind. He discovers the utmost dramatic generalship in bringing off his characters at a pinch, and by an instantaneous *ruse de guerre*, when the case seems hopeless in any other hands. The train of his associations, to express the same thing in metaphysical language, lies in following the suggestions of his fancy into every possible connexion of cause and effect, rather than into every possible combination of likeness or difference. His ablest characters shew that they are so by displaying their ingenuity, address, and presence of mind in critical junctures, and in their own affairs, rather than their wisdom or their wit 'in intellectual gladiatorship,' or in speculating on the affairs and characters of other people.

Farquhar's chief characters are also adventurers; but they are adventurers of a romantic, not a knavish stamp, and succeed no less by their honesty than their boldness. They conquer their difficulties, and effect their 'hair-breadth 'scapes' by the impulse of natural enthusiasm and the confidence of high principles of gallantry and honour, as much as by their dexterity and readiness at expedients. They are real gentlemen, and only pretended impostors. Vanbrugh's upstart heroes are without 'any relish of salvation,' without generosity, virtue, or any pretensions to it. We have little sympathy for them, and no respect at all. But we have every sort of good-will towards Farquhar's heroes, who have as many peccadillos to answer for, and

play as many rogue's tricks, but are honest fellows at bottom. I know little other difference between these two capital writers and copyists of nature, than that Farquhar's nature is the better nature of the two. We seem to like both the author and his favourites. He has humour, character, and invention, in common with the other, with a more unaffected gaiety and spirit of enjoyment, which overflows and sparkles in all he does. He makes us laugh from pleasure oftener than from malice. He somewhere prides himself in having introduced on the stage the class of comic heroes here spoken of, which has since become a standard character, and which represents the warm-hearted, rattle-brained, thoughtless, high-spirited young fellow, who floats on the back of his misfortunes without repining, who forfeits appearances, but saves his honour—and he gives us to understand that it was his own. He did not need to be ashamed of it. Indeed there is internal evidence that this sort of character is his own, for it pervades his works generally, and is the moving spirit that informs them. His comedies have on this account probably a greater appearance of truth and nature than almost any others. His incidents succeed one another with rapidity, but without premeditation; his wit is easy and spontaneous; his style animated, unembarrassed, and flowing; his characters full of life and spirit, and never overstrained so as to 'o'erstep the modesty of nature,' though they sometimes, from haste and carelessness, seem left in a crude, unfinished state. There is a constant ebullition of gay, laughing invention, cordial good humour, and fine animal spirits, in his writings.

Of the four writers here classed together, we should perhaps have courted Congreve's acquaintance most, for his wit and the elegance of his manners; Wycherley's, for his sense and observation on human nature; Vanbrugh's, for his power of farcical description and telling a story; Farquhar's, for the pleasure of his society, and the love of good fellowship. His fine gentlemen are not gentlemen of fortune and fashion, like those in Congreve; but are rather 'God Almighty's gentlemen.' His valets are good fellows: even his chambermaids are some of them disinterested and sincere. But his fine ladies, it must be allowed, are not so amiable, so witty, or accomplished, as those in Congreve. Perhaps they both described women in high-life as they found them: Congreve took their conversation, Farquhar their conduct. In the way of fashionable vice and petrifying affectation, there is nothing to come up to his Lady Lurewell, in the Trip to the Jubilee. She by no means makes good Mr. Burke's courtly and chivalrous observation, that the evil of vice consists principally in its want of refinement; and one benefit of the dramatic exhibition of such characters is, that they overturn false maxims of morality, and

settle accounts fairly and satisfactorily between theory and practice. Her lover, Colonel Standard, is indeed an awkward incumbrance upon so fine a lady: it was a character that the poet did not like; and he has merely sketched him in, leaving him to answer for himself as well as he could, which is but badly. We have no suspicion, either from his conduct, or from any hint dropped by accident, that he is the first seducer and the possessor of the virgin affections of Lady Lurewell. The double transformation of this virago from vice to virtue, and from virtue to vice again, her plausible pretensions and artful wiles, her violent temper and dissolute passions, shew a thorough knowledge of the effects both of nature and habit in making up human character. Farquhar's own heedless turn for gallantry would be likely to throw him upon such a character; and his goodness of heart and sincerity of disposition would teach him to expose its wanton duplicity and gilded rottenness. Lurewell is almost as abandoned a character as Olivia, in the Plain Dealer; but the indignation excited against her is of a less serious and tragic cast. Her peevish disgust and affected horror at every thing that comes near her, form a very edifying picture. Her dissatisfaction and *ennui* are not mere airs and graces worn for fashion's sake; but are real and tormenting inmates of her breast, arising from a surfeit of pleasure and the consciousness of guilt. All that is hateful in the caprice, ill humour, spite, *hauteur*, folly, impudence, and affectation of the complete woman of quality, is contained in the scene between her and her servants in the first act. The depravity would be intolerable, even in imagination, if the weakness were not ludicrous in the extreme. It shews, in the highest degree, the power of circumstances and example to pervert the understanding, the imagination, and even the senses. The manner in which the character of the gay, wild, free-hearted, but not altogether profligate or unfeeling Sir Harry Wildair is played off against the designing, vindictive, imperious, uncontrolable, and unreasonable humours of Lurewell, in the scene where she tries to convince him of his wife's infidelity, while he stops his ears to her pretended proofs, is not surpassed in modern comedy. I shall give it here:—

'*Wildair*. Now, dear madam, I have secur'd my brother, you have dispos'd of the colonel, and we'll rail at love till we ha'n't a word more to say.

Lurewell. Ay, Sir Harry. Please to sit a little, Sir. You must know I'm in a strange humour of asking you some questions. How did you like your lady, pray, Sir?

Wild. Like her! Ha, ha, ha. So very well, faith, that for her very sake I'm in love with every woman I meet.

Lure. And did matrimony please you extremely?

Wild. So very much, that if polygamy were allow'd, I would have a new wife every day.

Lure. Oh, Sir Harry! this is raillery. But your serious thoughts upon the matter, pray.

Wild. Why, then, Madam, to give you my true sentiments of wedlock: I had a lady that I married by chance, she was virtuous by chance, and I lov'd her by great chance. Nature gave her beauty, education an air; and fortune threw a young fellow of five-and-twenty in her lap. I courted her all day, lov'd her all night; she was my mistress one day, and my wife another: I found in one the variety of a thousand, and the very confinement of marriage gave me the pleasure of change.

Lure. And she was very virtuous.

Wild. Look ye, Madam, you know she was beautiful. She had good nature about her mouth, the smile of beauty in her cheeks, sparkling wit in her forehead, and sprightly love in her eyes.

Lure. Pshaw! I knew her very well; the woman was well enough. But you don't answer my question, Sir.

Wild. So, Madam, as I told you before, she was young and beautiful, I was rich and vigorous; my estate gave a lustre to my love, and a swing to our enjoyment; round, like the ring that made us one, our golden pleasures circled without end.

Lure. Golden pleasures! Golden fiddlesticks. What d 'ye tell me of your canting stuff? Was she virtuous, I say?

Wild. Ready to burst with envy; but I will torment thee a little. [*Aside.*] So, Madam, I powder'd to please her, she dress'd to engage me; we toy'd away the morning in amorous nonsense, loll'd away the evening in the Park or the playhouse, and all the night—hem!

Lure. Look ye, Sir, answer my question, or I shall take it ill.

Wild. Then, Madam, there was never such a pattern of unity. Her wants were still prevented by my supplies; my own heart whisper'd me her desires, 'cause she herself was there; no contention ever rose, but the dear strife of who should most oblige: no noise about authority; for neither would stoop to command, 'cause both thought it glory to obey.

Lure. Stuff! stuff! stuff! I won't believe a word on 't.

Wild. Ha, ha, ha. Then, Madam, we never felt the yoke of matrimony, because our inclinations made us one; a power superior to the forms of wedlock. The marriage torch had lost its weaker light in the bright flame of mutual love that join'd our hearts before; then—

Lure. Hold, hold, Sir; I cannot bear it; Sir Harry, I 'm affronted.

Wild. Ha, ha, ha. Affronted!

Lure. Yes, Sir; 'tis an affront to any woman to hear another commended; and I will resent it.—In short, Sir Harry, your wife was a—

Wild. Buz, Madam—no detraction! I 'll tell you what she was. So much an angel in her conduct, that though I saw another in her arms, I should have thought the devil had rais'd the phantom, and my more conscious reason had given my eyes the lie.

Lure. Very well! Then I a'n't to be believ'd, it seems. But, d 'ye hear, Sir?

Wild. Nay, Madam, do you hear! I tell you, tis not in the power of

malice to cast a blot upon her fame; and though the vanity of our sex, and the envy of yours, conspir'd both against her honour, I would not hear a syllable. [*Stopping his ears.*

Lure. Why then, as I hope to breathe, you shall hear it. The picture! the picture! the picture! [*Bawling aloud.*

Wild. Ran, tan, tan. A pistol-bullet from ear to ear.

Lure. That picture which you had just now from the French marquis for a thousand pound; that very picture did your very virtuous wife send to the marquis as a pledge of her very virtuous and dying affection. So that you are both robb'd of your honour, and cheated of your money. [*Aloud.*

Wild. Louder, louder, Madam.

Lure. I tell you, Sir, your wife was a jilt; I know it, I'll swear it. She virtuous! she was a devil!

Wild. [*Sings.*] Tal, al, deral.

Lure. Was ever the like seen! He won't hear me. I burst with malice, and now he won't mind me! Won't you hear me yet?

Wild. No, no, Madam.

Lure. Nay, then I can't bear it. [*Bursts out a crying.*] Sir, I must say that you're an unworthy person, to use a woman of quality at this rate, when she has her heart full of malice; I don't know but it may make me miscarry. Sir, I say again and again, that she was no better than one of us, and I know it; I have seen it with my eyes, so I have.

Wild. Good heav'ns deliver me, I beseech thee. How shall I 'scape!

Lure. Will you hear me yet? Dear Sir Harry, do but hear me; I'm longing to speak.

Wild. Oh! I have it.—Hush, hush, hush.

Lure. Eh! what's the matter?

Wild. A mouse! a mouse! a mouse!

Lure. Where? where? where?

Wild. Your petticoats, your petticoats, Madam. [*Lurewell shrieks and runs.*] O my head! I was never worsted by a woman before. But I have heard so much to know the marquis to be a villain. [*Knocking.*] Nay, then, I must run for't. [*Runs out, and returns.*] The entry is stopt by a chair coming in; and something there is in that chair that I will discover, if I can find a place to hide myself. [*Goes to the closet door.*] Fast! I have keys about me for most locks about St. James's. Let me see. [*Tries one key.*] No, no; this opens my Lady Planthorn's back-door. [*Tries another.*] Nor this; this is the key to my Lady Stakeall's garden. [*Tries a third.*] Ay, ay, this does it, faith. [*Goes into the closet.*]'

The dialogue between Cherry and Archer, in the Beaux' Stratagem, in which she repeats her well-conned love catechism, is as good as this, but not so fit to be repeated any where but on the stage. The Beaux' Stratagem is the best of his plays, as a whole; infinitely lively, bustling, and full of point and interest. The assumed disguise of the two principal characters, Archer and Aimwell, is a perpetual amusement to the mind. Scrub is an indispensable appendage to a

country gentleman's kitchen, and an exquisite confidant for the secrets of young ladies. The Recruiting Officer is not one of Farquhar's best comedies, though it is light and entertaining. It contains chiefly sketches and hints of characters; and the conclusion of the plot is rather lame. He informs us, in the dedication to the published play, that it was founded on some local and personal circumstances that happened in Shropshire, where he was himself a recruiting officer; and it seems not unlikely, that most of the scenes actually took place at the foot of the Wrekin. The Inconstant is much superior to it. The romantic interest and impressive catastrophe of this play I thought had been borrowed from the more poetical and tragedy-practised muse of Beaumont and Fletcher; but I find they are taken from an actual circumstance which took place in the author's knowledge, at Paris. His other pieces, Love and a Bottle, and the Twin Rivals, are not on a par with these; and are no longer in possession of the stage. The public are, after all, not the worst judges.—Farquhar's Letters, prefixed to the collection of his plays, are lively, good humoured, and sensible; and contain, among other things, an admirable exposition of the futility of the dramatic unities of time and place. This criticism preceded Dennis's remarks on that subject, in his Strictures on Mr. Addison's Cato; and completely anticipates all that Dr. Johnson has urged so unanswerably on the subject, in his preface to Shakspeare.

We may date the decline of English comedy from the time of Farquhar. For this several causes might be assigned in the political and moral changes of the times; but among other minor ones, Jeremy Collier, in his View of the English Stage, frightened the poets, and did all he could to spoil the stage, by pretending to reform it; that is, by making it an echo of the pulpit, instead of a reflection of the manners of the world. He complains bitterly of the profaneness of the stage; and is for fining the actors for every oath they utter, to put an end to the practice; as if common swearing had been an invention of the poets and stage players. He cannot endure that the fine gentlemen drink, and the fine ladies intrigue, in the scenes of Congreve and Wycherley, when things so contrary to law and gospel happened nowhere else. He is vehement against duelling, as a barbarous custom, of which the example is suffered with impunity nowhere but on the stage. He is shocked at the number of fortunes that are irreparably ruined by the vice of gaming on the boards of the theatres. He seems to think that every breach of the ten commandments begins and ends there. He complains that the tame husbands of his time are laughed at on the stage, and that the successful gallants triumph, which was without precedent either in the city or

the court. He does not think it enough that the stage 'shews vice its own image, scorn its own feature,' unless they are damned at the same instant, and carried off (like Don Juan) by real devils to the infernal regions, before the faces of the spectators. It seems that the author would have been contented to be present at a comedy or a farce, like a Father Inquisitor, if there was to be an *auto da fé* at the end, to burn both the actors and the poet. This sour, nonjuring critic has a great horror and repugnance at poor human nature, in nearly all its shapes; of the existence of which he appears only to be aware through the stage: and this he considers as the only exception to the practice of piety, and the performance of the whole duty of man; and seems fully convinced, that if this nuisance were abated, the whole world would be regulated according to the creed and the catechism.—This is a strange blindness and infatuation! He forgets, in his overheated zeal, two things: First, That the stage must be copied from real life, that the manners represented there must exist elsewhere, and 'denote a foregone conclusion,' to satisfy common sense.—Secondly, That the stage cannot shock common decency, according to the notions that prevail of it in any age or country, because the exhibition is public. If the pulpit, for instance, had banished all vice and imperfection from the world, as our critic would suppose, we should not have seen the offensive reflection of them on the stage, which he resents as an affront to the cloth, and an outrage on religion. On the contrary, with such a sweeping reformation as this theory implies, the office of the preacher, as well as of the player, would be gone; and if the common peccadillos of lying, swearing, intriguing, fighting, drinking, gaming, and other such obnoxious dramatic common-places, were once fairly got rid of in reality, neither the comic poet would be able to laugh at them on the stage, nor our good-natured author to consign them over to damnation elsewhere. The work is, however, written with ability, and did much mischief: it produced those *do-me-good*, lack-a-daisical, whining, make-believe comedies in the next age, (such as Steele's Conscious Lovers, and others,) which are enough to set one to sleep, and where the author tries in vain to be merry and wise in the same breath; in which the utmost stretch of licentiousness goes no farther than the gallant's being suspected of keeping a mistress, and the highest proof of courage is given in his refusing to accept a challenge.

In looking into the old editions of the comedies of the last age, I find the names of the best actors of those times, of whom scarcely any record is left but in Colley Cibber's Life, and the monument to Mrs. Oldfield, in Westminster Abbey; which Voltaire reckons

among the proofs of the liberality, wisdom, and politeness of the English nation:—

'Let no rude hand deface it,
And its forlorn *hic jacet*.'

Authors after their deaths live in their works; players only in their epitaphs and the breath of common tradition. They 'die and leave the world no copy.' Their uncertain popularity is as short-lived as it is dazzling: and in a few years nothing is known of them but that *they were.*

LECTURE V

ON THE PERIODICAL ESSAYISTS

'THE PROPER STUDY OF MANKIND IS MAN'

I NOW come to speak of that sort of writing which has been so successfully cultivated in this country by our periodical Essayists, and which consists in applying the talents and resources of the mind to all that mixed mass of human affairs, which, though not included under the head of any regular art, science, or profession, falls under the cognizance of the writer, and 'comes home to the business and bosoms of men.' *Quicquid agunt homines nostri farrago libelli*, is the general motto of this department of literature. It does not treat of minerals or fossils, of the virtues of plants, or the influence of planets; it does not meddle with forms of belief, or systems of philosophy, nor launch into the world of spiritual existences; but it makes familiar with the world of men and women, records their actions, assigns their motives, exhibits their whims, characterises their pursuits in all their singular and endless variety, ridicules their absurdities, exposes their inconsistencies, 'holds the mirror up to nature, and shews the very age and body of the time its form and pressure;' takes minutes of our dress, air, looks, words, thoughts, and actions; shews us what we are, and what we are not; plays the whole game of human life over before us, and by making us enlightened spectators of its many-coloured scenes, enables us (if possible) to become tolerably reasonable agents in the one in which we have to perform a part. 'The act and practic part of life is thus made the mistress of our theorique.' It is the best and most natural course of study. It is in morals and manners what the experimental is in natural philosophy, as opposed to the dogmatical method. It does not deal in sweeping clauses of proscription and anathema, but in nice

distinctions and liberal constructions. It makes up its general accounts from details, its few theories from many facts. It does not try to prove all black or all white as it wishes, but lays on the intermediate colours, (and most of them not unpleasing ones,) as it finds them blended with 'the web of our life, which is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together.' It inquires what human life is and has been, to shew what it ought to be. It follows it into courts and camps, into town and country, into rustic sports or learned disputations, into the various shades of prejudice or ignorance, of refinement or barbarism, into its private haunts or public pageants, into its weaknesses and littlenesses, its professions and its practices—before it pretends to distinguish right from wrong, or one thing from another. How, indeed, should it do so otherwise?

> 'Quid sit pulchrum, quid turpe, quid utile, quid non,
> Plenius et melius Chrysippo et Crantore dicit.'

The writers I speak of are, if not moral philosophers, moral historians, and that 's better: or if they are both, they found the one character upon the other; their premises precede their conclusions; and we put faith in their testimony, for we know that it is true.

Montaigne was the first person who in his Essays led the way to this kind of writing among the moderns. The great merit of Montaigne then was, that he may be said to have been the first who had the courage to say as an author what he felt as a man. And as courage is generally the effect of conscious strength, he was probably led to do so by the richness, truth, and force of his own observations on books and men. He was, in the truest sense, a man of original mind, that is, he had the power of looking at things for himself, or as they really were, instead of blindly trusting to, and fondly repeating what others told him that they were. He got rid of the go-cart of prejudice and affectation, with the learned lumber that follows at their heels, because he could do without them. In taking up his pen he did not set up for a philosopher, wit, orator, or moralist, but he became all these by merely daring to tell us whatever passed through his mind, in its naked simplicity and force, that he thought any ways worth communicating. He did not, in the abstract character of an author, undertake to say all that could be said upon a subject, but what in his capacity as an inquirer after truth he happened to know about it. He was neither a pedant nor a bigot. He neither supposed that he was bound to know all things, nor that all things were bound to conform to what he had fancied or would have them to be. In treating of men and manners, he spoke of them as he found them, not according to pre-

conceived notions and abstract dogmas; and he began by teaching us what he himself was. In criticising books he did not compare them with rules and systems, but told us what he saw to like or dislike in them. He did not take his standard of excellence 'according to an exact scale' of Aristotle, or fall out with a work that was good for any thing, because 'not one of the angles at the four corners was a right one.' He was, in a word, the first author who was not a book-maker, and who wrote not to make converts of others to established creeds and prejudices, but to satisfy his own mind of the truth of things. In this respect we know not which to be most charmed with, the author or the man. There is an inexpressible frankness and sincerity, as well as power, in what he writes. There is no attempt at imposition or concealment, no juggling tricks or solemn mouthing, no laboured attempts at proving himself always in the right, and every body else in the wrong; he says what is uppermost, lays open what floats at the top or the bottom of his mind, and deserves Pope's character of him, where he professes to

> '——pour out all as plain
> As downright Shippen, or as old Montaigne.'[1]

He does not converse with us like a pedagogue with his pupil, whom he wishes to make as great a blockhead as himself, but like a philosopher and friend who has passed through life with thought and observation, and is willing to enable others to pass through it with pleasure and profit. A writer of this stamp, I confess, appears to me as much superior to a common bookworm, as a library of real books is superior to a mere book-case, painted and lettered on the outside with the names of celebrated works. As he was the first to attempt this new way of writing, so the same strong natural impulse which prompted the undertaking, carried him to the end of his career. The same force and honesty of mind which urged him to throw off the shackles of custom and prejudice, would enable him to complete his triumph over them. He has left little for his successors to achieve in the way of just and original speculation on human life. Nearly all the thinking of the two last centuries of that kind which the French denominate *morale observatrice*, is to be found in Montaigne's Essays: there is the germ, at least, and generally much more. He sowed the seed and cleared away the rubbish, even where others have reaped the fruit, or cultivated and decorated the soil to a greater degree of nicety and perfection.

[1] Why Pope should say in reference to him, 'Or *more wise* Charron,' is not easy to determine.

There is no one to whom the old Latin adage is more applicable than to Montaigne, '*Pereant isti qui ante nos nostra dixerunt.*' There has been no new impulse given to thought since his time. Among the specimens of criticisms on authors which he has left us, are those on Virgil, Ovid, and Boccaccio, in the account of books which he thinks worth reading, or (which is the same thing) which he finds he can read in his old age, and which may be reckoned among the few criticisms which are worth reading at any age.[1]

Montaigne's Essays were translated into English by Charles Cotton, who was one of the wits and poets of the age of Charles II; and Lord Halifax, one of the noble critics of that day, declared it to be 'the book in the world he was the best pleased with.' This mode of familiar Essay-writing, free from the trammels of the schools, and the airs of professed authorship, was successfully imitated, about the same time, by Cowley and Sir William Temple, in their miscellaneous Essays, which are very agreeable and learned talking upon paper. Lord Shaftesbury, on the contrary, who aimed at the same easy, *degagé* mode of communicating his thoughts to the world, has quite spoiled his matter, which is sometimes valuable, by his manner, in which he carries a certain flaunting, flowery, figurative, flirting style of amicable condescension to the reader, to an excess more tantalising than the most starched and ridiculous

[1] As an instance of his general power of reasoning, I shall give his chapter entitled *One Man's Profit is another's Loss*, in which he has nearly anticipated Mandeville's celebrated paradox of private vices being public benefits :—

'Demades, the Athenian, condemned a fellow-citizen, who furnished out funerals, for demanding too great a price for his goods : and if he got an estate, it must be by the death of a great many people : but I think it a sentence ill grounded, forasmuch as no profit can be made, but at the expense of some other person, and that every kind of gain is by that rule liable to be condemned. The tradesman thrives by the debauchery of youth, and the farmer by the dearness of corn ; the architect by the ruin of buildings, the officers of justice by quarrels and law-suits ; nay, even the honour and function of divines is owing to our mortality and vices. No physician takes pleasure in the health even of his best friends, said the ancient Greek comedian, nor soldier in the peace of his country ; and so of the rest. And, what is yet worse, let every one but examine his own heart, and he will find that his private wishes spring and grow up at the expense of some other person. Upon which consideration this thought came into my head, that nature does not hereby deviate from her general policy ; for the naturalists hold, that the birth, nourishment, and increase of any one thing is the decay and corruption of another :

Nam quodcunque suis mutatum finibus exit,
Continuo hoc mors est illius, quod fuit ante. i.e.

For what from its own confines chang'd doth pass,
Is straight the death of what before it was.'

Vol. I. *Chap.* XXI.

formality of the age of James I. There is nothing so tormenting as the affectation of ease and freedom from affectation.

The ice being thus thawed, and the barrier that kept authors at a distance from common sense and feeling broken through, the transition was not difficult from Montaigne and his imitators, to our Periodical Essayists. These last applied the same unrestrained expression of their thoughts to the more immediate and passing scenes of life, to temporary and local matters; and in order to discharge the invidious office of *Censor Morum* more freely, and with less responsibility, assumed some fictitious and humorous disguise, which, however, in a great degree corresponded to their own peculiar habits and character. By thus concealing their own name and person under the title of the Tatler, Spectator, &c. they were enabled to inform us more fully of what was passing in the world, while the dramatic contrast and ironical point of view to which the whole is subjected, added a greater liveliness and *piquancy* to the descriptions. The philosopher and wit here commences newsmonger, makes himself master of 'the perfect spy o' th' time,' and from his various walks and turns through life, brings home little curious specimens of the humours, opinions, and manners of his contemporaries, as the botanist brings home different plants and weeds, or the mineralogist different shells and fossils, to illustrate their several theories, and be useful to mankind.

The first of these papers that was attempted in this country was set up by Steele in the beginning of the last century; and of all our periodical Essayists, the *Tatler* (for that was the name he assumed) has always appeared to me the most amusing and agreeable. Montaigne, whom I have proposed to consider as the father of this kind of personal authorship among the moderns, in which the reader is admitted behind the curtain, and sits down with the writer in his gown and slippers, was a most magnanimous and undisguised egotist; but Isaac Bickerstaff, Esq. was the more disinterested gossip of the two. The French author is contented to describe the peculiarities of his own mind and constitution, which he does with a copious and unsparing hand. The English journalist good-naturedly lets you into the secret both of his own affairs and those of others. A young lady, on the other side Temple Bar, cannot be seen at her glass for half a day together, but Mr. Bickerstaff takes due notice of it; and he has the first intelligence of the symptoms of the *belle* passion appearing in any young gentleman at the West-end of the town. The departures and arrivals of widows with handsome jointures, either to bury their grief in the country, or to procure a second husband in town, are punctually recorded in his pages. He

is well acquainted with the celebrated beauties of the preceding age at the court of Charles II.; and the old gentleman (as he feigns himself) often grows romantic in recounting 'the disastrous strokes which his youth suffered' from the glances of their bright eyes, and their unaccountable caprices. In particular, he dwells with a secret satisfaction on the recollection of one of his mistresses, who left him for a richer rival, and whose constant reproach to her husband, on occasion of any quarrel between them, was 'I, that might have married the famous Mr. Bickerstaff, to be treated in this manner!' The club at the Trumpet consists of a set of persons almost as well worth knowing as himself. The cavalcade of the justice of the peace, the knight of the shire, the country squire, and the young gentleman, his nephew, who came to wait on him at his chambers, in such form and ceremony, seem not to have settled the order of their precedence to this hour;[1] and I should hope that the upholsterer and his companions, who used to sun themselves in the Green Park, and who broke their rest and fortunes to maintain the balance of power in Europe, stand as fair a chance for immortality as some modern politicians. Mr. Bickerstaff himself is a gentleman and a scholar, a humourist, and a man of the world; with a great deal of nice easy *naïveté* about him. If he walks out and is caught in a shower of rain, he makes amends for this unlucky accident by a criticism on the shower in Virgil, and concludes with a burlesque copy of verses on a city-shower. He entertains us, when he dates from his own apartment, with a quotation from Plutarch, or a moral reflection; from the Grecian coffee-house with politics; and from Wills', or the Temple, with the poets and players, the beaux and men of wit and pleasure about town. In reading the pages of the Tatler, we seem as if suddenly carried back to the age of Queen Anne, of toupees and full-bottomed periwigs. The whole appearance of our dress and manners undergoes a delightful metamorphosis. The beaux and the belles are of a quite different species from what they are at present; we distinguish the dappers, the smarts, and the pretty fellows, as they pass by Mr. Lilly's shop-windows in the Strand; we are introduced to Betterton and Mrs. Oldfield behind the scenes; are made familiar with the persons and performances of Will Estcourt or Tom Durfey; we listen to a dispute at a tavern, on the merits of the Duke of Marlborough, or Marshal Turenne; or are present at the first rehearsal of a play by Vanbrugh, or the reading of a new poem by Mr. Pope. The privilege of thus virtually transporting ourselves to past times, is even greater than that of visiting distant

[1] No. 125.

places in reality. London, a hundred years ago, would be much better worth seeing than Paris at the present moment.

It will be said, that all this is to be found, in the same or a greater degree, in the Spectator. For myself, I do not think so; or at least, there is in the last work a much greater proportion of commonplace matter. I have, on this account, always preferred the Tatler to the Spectator. Whether it is owing to my having been earlier or better acquainted with the one than the other, my pleasure in reading these two admirable works is not in proportion to their comparative reputation. The Tatler contains only half the number of volumes, and, I will venture to say, nearly an equal quantity of sterling wit and sense. 'The first sprightly runnings' are there; it has more of the original spirit, more of the freshness and stamp of nature. The indications of character and strokes of humour are more true and frequent; the reflections that suggest themselves arise more from the occasion, and are less spun out into regular dissertations. They are more like the remarks which occur in sensible conversation, and less like a lecture. Something is left to the understanding of the reader. Steele seems to have gone into his closet chiefly to set down what he observed out of doors. Addison seems to have spent most of his time in his study, and to have spun out and wire-drawn the hints, which he borrowed from Steele, or took from nature, to the utmost. I am far from wishing to depreciate Addison's talents, but I am anxious to do justice to Steele, who was, I think, upon the whole, a less artificial and more original writer. The humorous descriptions of Steele resemble loose sketches, or fragments of a comedy; those of Addison are rather comments or ingenious paraphrases on the genuine text. The characters of the club not only in the Tatler, but in the Spectator, were drawn by Steele. That of Sir Roger de Coverley is among the number. Addison has, however, gained himself immortal honour by his manner of filling up this last character. Who is there that can forget, or be insensible to, the inimitable nameless graces and varied traits of nature and of old English character in it—to his unpretending virtues and amiable weaknesses—to his modesty, generosity, hospitality, and eccentric whims—to the respect of his neighbours, and the affection of his domestics—to his wayward, hopeless, secret passion for his fair enemy, the widow, in which there is more of real romance and true delicacy, than in a thousand tales of knight-errantry—(we perceive the hectic flush of his cheek, the faltering of his tongue in speaking of her bewitching airs and 'the whiteness of her hand')—to the havoc he makes among the game in his neighbourhood—to his speech from the bench, to shew the Spectator what is thought of

him in the country—to his unwillingness to be put up as a sign-post, and his having his own likeness turned into the Saracen's head—to his gentle reproof of the baggage of a gipsy that tells him 'he has a widow in his line of life'—to his doubts as to the existence of witchcraft, and protection of reputed witches—to his account of the family pictures, and his choice of a chaplain—to his falling asleep at church, and his reproof of John Williams, as soon as he recovered from his nap, for talking in sermon-time. The characters of Will, Wimble, and Will. Honeycomb are not a whit behind their friend, Sir Roger, in delicacy and felicity. The delightful simplicity and good-humoured officiousness in the one, are set off by the graceful affectation and courtly pretension in the other. How long since I first became acquainted with these two characters in the Spectator! What old-fashioned friends they seem, and yet I am not tired of them, like so many other friends, nor they of me! How airy these abstractions of the poet's pen stream over the dawn of our acquaintance with human life! how they glance their fairest colours on the prospect before us! how pure they remain in it to the last, like the rainbow in the evening-cloud, which the rude hand of time and experience can neither soil nor dissipate! What a pity that we cannot find the reality, and yet if we did, the dream would be over. I once thought I knew a Will. Wimble, and a Will. Honeycomb, but they turned out but indifferently; the originals in the Spectator still read, word for word, the same that they always did. We have only to turn to the page, and find them where we left them!—Many of the most exquisite pieces in the Tatler, it is to be observed, are Addison's, as the Court of Honour, and the Personification of Musical Instruments, with almost all those papers that form regular sets or series. I do not know whether the picture of the family of an old college acquaintance, in the Tatler, where the children run to let Mr. Bickerstaff in at the door, and where the one that loses the race that way, turns back to tell the father that he is come; with the nice gradation of incredulity in the little boy, who is got into Guy of Warwick, and the Seven Champions, and who shakes his head at the improbability of Æsop's Fables, is Steele's or Addison's, though I believe it belongs to the former. The account of the two sisters, one of whom held up her head higher than ordinary, from having on a pair of flowered garters, and that of the married lady who complained to the Tatler of the neglect of her husband, with her answers to some *home* questions that were put to her, are unquestionably Steele's.—If the Tatler is not inferior to the Spectator as a record of manners and character, it is superior to it in the interest of many of the

stories. Several of the incidents related there by Steele have never been surpassed in the heart-rending pathos of private distress. I might refer to those of the lover and his mistress, when the theatre, in which they were, caught fire; of the bridegroom, who by accident kills his bride on the day of their marriage; the story of Mr. Eustace and his wife; and the fine dream about his own mistress when a youth. What has given its superior reputation to the Spectator, is the greater gravity of its pretensions, its moral dissertations and critical reasonings, by which I confess myself less edified than by other things, which are thought more lightly of. Systems and opinions change, but nature is always true. It is the moral and didactic tone of the Spectator which makes us apt to think of Addison (according to Mandeville's sarcasm) as 'a parson in a tie-wig.' Many of his moral Essays are, however, exquisitely beautiful and quite happy. Such are the reflections on cheerfulness, those in Westminster Abbey, on the Royal Exchange, and particularly some very affecting ones on the death of a young lady in the fourth volume. These, it must be allowed, are the perfection of elegant sermonising. His critical Essays are not so good. I prefer Steele's occasional selection of beautiful poetical passages, without any affectation of analysing their beauties, to Addison's finer-spun theories. The best criticism in the Spectator, that on the Cartoons of Raphael, of which Mr. Fuseli has availed himself with great spirit in his Lectures, is by Steele.[1] I owed this acknowledgment to a writer who has so often put me in good humour with myself, and every thing about me, when few things else could, and when the tomes of casuistry and ecclesiastical history, with which the little duodecimo volumes of the Tatler were overwhelmed and surrounded, in the only library to which I had access when a boy, had tried their tranquillising effects upon me in vain. I had not long ago in my hands, by favour of a friend, an original copy of the quarto edition of the Tatler, with a list of the subscribers. It is curious to see some names there which we should hardly think of, (that of Sir Isaac Newton is among them,) and also to observe the degree of interest excited by those of the different persons, which is not determined according to the rules of the Herald's College. One literary name lasts as long as a whole race of heroes and their descendants! The Guardian, which followed the Spectator, was, as may be supposed, inferior to it.

The dramatic and conversational turn which forms the distin-

[1] The antithetical style and verbal paradoxes which Burke was so fond of, in which the epithet is a seeming contradiction to the substantive, such as 'proud submission and dignified obedience,' are, I think, first to be found in the Tatler.

guishing feature and greatest charm of the Spectator and Tatler, is quite lost in the Rambler by Dr. Johnson. There is no reflected light thrown on human life from an assumed character, nor any direct one from a display of the author's own. The Tatler and Spectator are, as it were, made up of notes and memorandums of the events and incidents of the day, with finished studies after nature, and characters fresh from the life, which the writer moralises upon, and turns to account as they come before him: the Rambler is a collection of moral Essays, or scholastic theses, written on set subjects, and of which the individual characters and incidents are merely artificial illustrations, brought in to give a pretended relief to the dryness of didactic discussion. The Rambler is a splendid and imposing common-place-book of general topics, and rhetorical declamation on the conduct and business of human life. In this sense, there is hardly a reflection that had been suggested on such subjects which is not to be found in this celebrated work, and there is, perhaps, hardly a reflection to be found in it which had not been already suggested and developed by some other author, or in the common course of conversation. The mass of intellectual wealth here heaped together is immense, but it is rather the result of gradual accumulation, the produce of the general intellect, labouring in the mine of knowledge and reflection, than dug out of the quarry, and dragged into the light by the industry and sagacity of a single mind. I am not here saying that Dr. Johnson was a man without originality, compared with the ordinary run of men's minds, but he was not a man of original thought or genius, in the sense in which Montaigne or Lord Bacon was. He opened no new vein of precious ore, nor did he light upon any single pebbles of uncommon size and unrivalled lustre. We seldom meet with any thing to 'give us pause;' he does not set us thinking for the first time. His reflections present themselves like reminiscences; do not disturb the ordinary march of our thoughts; arrest our attention by the stateliness of their appearance, and the costliness of their garb, but pass on and mingle with the throng of our impressions. After closing the volumes of the Rambler, there is nothing that we remember as a new truth gained to the mind, nothing indelibly stamped upon the memory; nor is there any passage that we wish to turn to as embodying any known principle or observation, with such force and beauty that justice can only be done to the idea in the author's own words. Such, for instance, are many of the passages to be found in Burke, which shine by their own light, belong to no class, have neither equal nor counterpart, and of which we say that no one but the author could have written them! There is neither the same

boldness of design, nor mastery of execution in Johnson. In the one, the spark of genius seems to have met with its congenial matter: the shaft is sped; the forked lightning dresses up the face of nature in ghastly smiles, and the loud thunder rolls far away from the ruin that is made. Dr. Johnson's style, on the contrary, resembles rather the rumbling of mimic thunder at one of our theatres; and the light he throws upon a subject is like the dazzling effect of phosphorus, or an *ignis fatuus* of words. There is a wide difference, however, between perfect originality and perfect common-place: neither ideas nor expressions are trite or vulgar because they are not quite new. They are valuable, and ought to be repeated, if they have not become quite common; and Johnson's style both of reasoning and imagery holds the middle rank between startling novelty and vapid common-place. Johnson has as much originality of thinking as Addison; but then he wants his familiarity of illustration, knowledge of character, and delightful humour.—What most distinguishes Dr. Johnson from other writers is the pomp and uniformity of his style. All his periods are cast in the same mould, are of the same size and shape, and consequently have little fitness to the variety of things he professes to treat of. His subjects are familiar, but the author is always upon stilts. He has neither ease nor simplicity, and his efforts at playfulness, in part, remind one of the lines in Milton:—

> 'The elephant
> To make them sport wreath'd his proboscis lithe.'

His Letters from Correspondents, in particular, are more pompous and unwieldy than what he writes in his own person. This want of relaxation and variety of manner has, I think, after the first effects of novelty and surprise were over, been prejudicial to the matter. It takes from the general power, not only to please, but to instruct. The monotony of style produces an apparent monotony of ideas. What is really striking and valuable, is lost in the vain ostentation and circumlocution of the expression; for when we find the same pains and pomp of diction bestowed upon the most trifling as upon the most important parts of a sentence or discourse, we grow tired of distinguishing between pretension and reality, and are disposed to confound the tinsel and bombast of the phraseology with want of weight in the thoughts. Thus, from the imposing and oracular nature of the style, people are tempted at first to imagine that our author's speculations are all wisdom and profundity: till having found out their mistake in some instances, they suppose that there is nothing but common-place in them, concealed under verbiage and pedantry; and in both they are wrong. The fault of Dr. Johnson's

style is, that it reduces all things to the same artificial and unmeaning level. It destroys all shades of difference, the association between words and things. It is a perpetual paradox and innovation. He condescends to the familiar till we are ashamed of our interest in it: he expands the little till it looks big. 'If he were to write a fable of little fishes,' as Goldsmith said of him, 'he would make them speak like great whales.' We can no more distinguish the most familiar objects in his descriptions of them, than we can a well-known face under a huge painted mask. The structure of his sentences, which was his own invention, and which has been generally imitated since his time, is a species of rhyming in prose, where one clause answers to another in measure and quantity, like the tagging of syllables at the end of a verse; the close of the period follows as mechanically as the oscillation of a pendulum, the sense is balanced with the sound; each sentence, revolving round its centre of gravity, is contained with itself like a couplet, and each paragraph forms itself into a stanza. Dr. Johnson is also a complete balance-master in the topics of morality. He never encourages hope, but he counteracts it by fear; he never elicits a truth, but he suggests some objection in answer to it. He seizes and alternately quits the clue of reason, lest it should involve him in the labyrinths of endless error: he wants confidence in himself and his fellows. He dares not trust himself with the immediate impressions of things, for fear of compromising his dignity; or follow them into their consequences, for fear of committing his prejudices. His timidity is the result, not of ignorance, but of morbid apprehension. 'He runs the great circle, and is still at home.' No advance is made by his writings in any sentiment, or mode of reasoning. Out of the pale of established authority and received dogmas, all is sceptical, loose, and desultory: he seems in imagination to strengthen the dominion of prejudice, as he weakens and dissipates that of reason; and round the rock of faith and power, on the edge of which he slumbers blindfold and uneasy, the waves and billows of uncertain and dangerous opinion roar and heave for evermore. His Rasselas is the most melancholy and debilitating moral speculation that ever was put forth. Doubtful of the faculties of his mind, as of his organs of vision, Johnson trusted only to his feelings and his fears. He cultivated a belief in witches as an out-guard to the evidences of religion; and abused Milton, and patronised Lauder, in spite of his aversion to his countrymen, as a step to secure the existing establishment in church and state. This was neither right feeling nor sound logic.

The most triumphant record of the talents and character of

Johnson is to be found in Boswell's Life of him. The man was superior to the author. When he threw aside his pen, which he regarded as an incumbrance, he became not only learned and thoughtful, but acute, witty, humorous, natural, honest; hearty and determined, 'the king of good fellows and wale of old men.' There are as many smart repartees, profound remarks, and keen invectives to be found in Boswell's 'inventory of all he said,' as are recorded of any celebrated man. The life and dramatic play of his conversation forms a contrast to his written works. His natural powers and undisguised opinions were called out in convivial intercourse. In public, he practised with the foils on: in private, he unsheathed the sword of controversy, and it was 'the Ebro's temper.' The eagerness of opposition roused him from his natural sluggishness and acquired timidity; he returned blow for blow; and whether the trial were of argument or wit, none of his rivals could boast much of the encounter. Burke seems to have been the only person who had a chance with him: and it is the unpardonable sin of Boswell's work, that he has purposely omitted their combats of strength and skill. Goldsmith asked, 'Does he wind into a subject like a serpent, as Burke does?' And when exhausted with sickness, he himself said, 'If that fellow Burke were here now, he would kill me.' It is to be observed, that Johnson's colloquial style was as blunt, direct, and downright, as his style of studied composition was involved and circuitous. As when Topham Beauclerc and Langton knocked him up at his chambers, at three in the morning, and he came to the door with the poker in his hand, but seeing them, exclaimed, 'What, is it you, my lads? then I'll have a frisk with you!' and he afterwards reproaches Langton, who was a literary milksop, for leaving them to go to an engagement 'with some *un-idead* girls.' What words to come from the mouth of the great moralist and lexicographer! His good deeds were as many as his good sayings. His domestic habits, his tenderness to servants, and readiness to oblige his friends; the quantity of strong tea that he drank to keep down sad thoughts; his many labours reluctantly begun, and irresolutely laid aside; his honest acknowledgement of his own, and indulgence to the weaknesses of others; his throwing himself back in the post-chaise with Boswell, and saying, 'Now I think I am a good-humoured fellow,' though nobody thought him so, and yet he was; his quitting the society of Garrick and his actresses, and his reason for it; his dining with Wilkes, and his kindness to Goldsmith; his sitting with the young ladies on his knee at the Mitre, to give them good advice, in which situation, if not explained, he might be taken for Falstaff; and last and noblest, his carrying the unfortunate victim

of disease and dissipation on his back up through Fleet Street, (an act which realises the parable of the good Samaritan)—all these, and innumerable others, endear him to the reader, and must be remembered to his lasting honour. He had faults, but they lie buried with him. He had his prejudices and his intolerant feelings; but he suffered enough in the conflict of his own mind with them. For if no man can be happy in the free exercise of his reason, no wise man can be happy without it. His were not time-serving, heartless, hypocritical prejudices; but deep, inwoven, not to be rooted out but with life and hope, which he found from old habit necessary to his own peace of mind, and thought so to the peace of mankind. I do not hate, but love him for them. They were between himself and his conscience; and should be left to that higher tribunal, 'where they in trembling hope repose, the bosom of his Father and his God.' In a word, he has left behind him few wiser or better men.

The herd of his imitators shewed what he was by their disproportionate effects. The Periodical Essayists, that succeeded the Rambler, are, and deserve to be, little read at present. The Adventurer, by Hawksworth, is completely trite and vapid, aping all the faults of Johnson's style, without any thing to atone for them. The sentences are often absolutely unmeaning; and one half of each might regularly be left blank. The World, and Connoisseur, which followed, are a little better; and in the last of these there is one good idea, that of a man in indifferent health, who judges of every one's title to respect from their possession of this blessing, and bows to a sturdy beggar with sound limbs and a florid complexion, while he turns his back upon a lord who is a valetudinarian.

Goldsmith's Citizen of the World, like all his works, bears the stamp of the author's mind. It does not 'go about to cozen reputation without the stamp of merit.' He is more observing, more original, more natural and picturesque than Johnson. His work is written on the model of the Persian Letters; and contrives to give an abstracted and somewhat perplexing view of things, by opposing foreign prepossessions to our own, and thus stripping objects of their customary disguises. Whether truth is elicited in this collision of contrary absurdities, I do not know; but I confess the process is too ambiguous and full of intricacy to be very amusing to my plain understanding. For light summer reading, it is like walking in a garden full of traps and pitfalls. It necessarily gives rise to paradoxes, and there are some very bold ones in the Essays, which would subject an author less established to no very agreeable sort of *censura literaria*. Thus the Chinese philosopher exclaims very unadvisedly, 'The bonzes and priests of all religions keep up superstition and imposture:

all reformations begin with the laity.' Goldsmith, however, was staunch in his practical creed, and might bolt speculative extravagances with impunity. There is a striking difference in this respect between him and Addison, who, if he attacked authority, took care to have common sense on his side, and never hazarded any thing offensive to the feelings of others, or on the strength of his own discretional opinion. There is another inconvenience in this assumption of an exotic character and tone of sentiment, that it produces an inconsistency between the knowledge which the individual has time to acquire, and which the author is bound to communicate. Thus the Chinese has not been in England three days before he is acquainted with the characters of the three countries which compose this kingdom, and describes them to his friend at Canton, by extracts from the newspapers of each metropolis. The nationality of Scotchmen is thus ridiculed :—'*Edinburgh*. We are positive when we say, that Sanders Macgregor, lately executed for horse-stealing, is not a native of Scotland, but born at Carrickfergus.' Now this is very good; but how should our Chinese philosopher find it out by instinct? Beau Tibbs, a prominent character in this little work, is the best comic sketch since the time of Addison; unrivalled in his finery, his vanity, and his poverty.

I have only to mention the names of the Lounger and the Mirror, which are ranked by the author's admirers with Sterne for sentiment, and with Addison for humour. I shall not enter into that: but I know that the story of La Roche is not like the story of Le Fevre, nor one hundredth part so good. Do I say this from prejudice to the author? No: for I have read his novels. Of the Man of the World I cannot think so favourably as some others; nor shall I here dwell on the picturesque and romantic beauties of Julia de Roubigné, the early favourite of the author of Rosamond Gray; but of the Man of Feeling I would speak with grateful recollections: nor is it possible to forget the sensitive, irresolute, interesting Harley: and that lone figure of Miss Walton in it, that floats in the horizon, dim and ethereal, the day-dream of her lover's youthful fancy—better, far better than all the realities of life!

LECTURES ON THE COMIC WRITERS

LECTURE VI

ON THE ENGLISH NOVELISTS

There is an exclamation in one of Gray's Letters—'Be mine to read eternal new romances of Marivaux and Crebillon!'—If I did not utter a similar aspiration at the conclusion of the last new novel which I read (I would not give offence by being more particular as to the name) it was not from any want of affection for the class of writing to which it belongs: for, without going so far as the celebrated French philosopher, who thought that more was to be learnt from good novels and romances than from the gravest treatises on history and morality, yet there are few works to which I am oftener tempted to turn for profit or delight, than to the standard productions in this species of composition. We find there a close imitation of men and manners; we see the very web and texture of society as it really exists, and as we meet with it when we come into the world. If poetry has 'something more divine in it,' this savours more of humanity. We are brought acquainted with the motives and characters of mankind, imbibe our notions of virtue and vice from practical examples, and are taught a knowledge of the world through the airy medium of romance. As a record of past manners and opinions, too, such writings afford the best and fullest information. For example, I should be at a loss where to find in any authentic documents of the same period so satisfactory an account of the general state of society, and of moral, political, and religious feeling in the reign of George II. as we meet with in the Adventures of Joseph Andrews and his friend Mr. Abraham Adams. This work, indeed, I take to be a perfect piece of statistics in its kind. In looking into any regular history of that period, into a learned and eloquent charge to a grand jury or the clergy of a diocese, or into a tract on controversial divinity, we should hear only of the ascendancy of the Protestant succession, the horrors of Popery, the triumph of civil and religious liberty, the wisdom and moderation of the sovereign, the happiness of the subject, and the flourishing state of manufactures and commerce. But if we really wish to know what all these fine-sounding names come to, we cannot do better than turn to the works of those, who having no other object than to imitate nature, could only hope for success from the fidelity of their pictures; and were bound (in self-defence) to reduce the boasts of vague theorists and the exaggerations of angry disputants to the mortifying standard of reality. Extremes are said to meet: and the works of

imagination, as they are called, sometimes come the nearest to truth and nature. Fielding in speaking on this subject, and vindicating the use and dignity of the style of writing in which he excelled against the loftier pretensions of professed historians, says, that in their productions nothing is true but the names and dates, whereas in his every thing is true but the names and dates. If so, he has the advantage on his side.

I will here confess, however, that I am a little prejudiced on the point in question; and that the effect of many fine speculations has been lost upon me, from an early familiarity with the most striking passages in the work to which I have just alluded. Thus nothing can be more captivating than the description somewhere given by Mr. Burke of the indissoluble connection between learning and nobility; and of the respect universally paid by wealth to piety and morals. But the effect of this ideal representation has always been spoiled by my recollection of Parson Adams sitting over his cup of ale in Sir Thomas Booby's kitchen. Echard 'On the Contempt of the Clergy' is, in like manner, a very good book, and 'worthy of all acceptation:' but, somehow, an unlucky impression of the reality of Parson Trulliber involuntarily checks the emotions of respect, to which it might otherwise give rise: while, on the other hand, the lecture which Lady Booby reads to Lawyer Scout on the immediate expulsion of Joseph and Fanny from the parish, casts no very favourable light on the flattering accounts of our practical jurisprudence which are to be found in Blackstone or De Lolme. The most moral writers, after all, are those who do not pretend to inculcate any moral. The professed moralist almost unavoidably degenerates into the partisan of a system; and the philosopher is too apt to warp the evidence to his own purpose. But the painter of manners gives the facts of human nature, and leaves us to draw the inference: if we are not able to do this, or do it ill, at least it is our own fault.

The first-rate writers in this class, of course, are few; but those few we may reckon among the greatest ornaments and best benefactors of our kind. There is a certain set of them who, as it were, take their rank by the side of reality, and are appealed to as evidence on all questions concerning human nature. The principal of these are Cervantes and Le Sage, who may be considered as having been naturalised among ourselves; and, of native English growth, Fielding, Smollett, Richardson, and Sterne.[1] As this is a depart-

[1] It is not to be forgotten that the author of Robinson Crusoe was also an Englishman. His other works, such as the Life of Colonel Jack, &c., are of the same cast, and leave an impression on the mind more like that of things than words.

ment of criticism which deserves more attention than has been usually bestowed upon it, I shall here venture to recur (not from choice, but necessity) to what I have said upon it in a well known periodical publication; and endeavour to contribute my mite towards settling the standard of excellence, both as to degree and kind, in these several writers.

I shall begin with the history of the renowned Don Quixote de la Mancha; who presents something more stately, more romantic, and at the same time more real to the imagination than any other hero upon record. His lineaments, his accoutrements, his pasteboard vizor, are familiar to us; and Mambrino's helmet still glitters in the sun! We not only feel the greatest veneration and love for the knight himself, but a certain respect for all those connected with him, the curate and Master Nicolas the barber, Sancho and Dapple, and even for Rosinante's leanness and his errors.—Perhaps there is no work which combines so much whimsical invention with such an air of truth. Its popularity is almost unequalled; and yet its merits have not been sufficiently understood. The story is the least part of them; though the blunders of Sancho, and the unlucky adventures of his master, are what naturally catch the attention of the majority of readers. The pathos and dignity of the sentiments are often disguised under the ludicrousness of the subject; and provoke laughter when they might well draw tears. The character of Don Quixote himself is one of the most perfect disinterestedness. He is an enthusiast of the most amiable kind; of a nature equally open, gentle, and generous; a lover of truth and justice; and one who had brooded over the fine dreams of chivalry and romance, till they had robbed him of himself, and cheated his brain into a belief of their reality. There cannot be a greater mistake than to consider Don Quixote as a merely satirical work, or as a vulgar attempt to explode 'the long-forgotten order of chivalry.' There could be no need to explode what no longer existed. Besides, Cervantes himself was a man of the most sanguine and enthusiastic temperament; and even through the crazed and battered figure of the knight, the spirit of chivalry shines out with undiminished lustre; as if the author had half-designed to revive the example of past ages, and once more 'witch the world with noble horsemanship.' Oh! if ever the mouldering flame of Spanish liberty is destined to break forth, wrapping the tyrant and the tyranny in one consuming blaze, that the spark of generous sentiment and romantic enterprise, from which it must be kindled, has not been quite extinguished, will perhaps be owing to thee, Cervantes, and to thy Don Quixote!

The character of Sancho is not more admirable in itself, than as a relief to that of the knight. The contrast is as picturesque and striking as that between the figures of Rosinante and Dapple. Never was there so complete a *partie quarrée*:—they answer to one another at all points. Nothing need surpass the truth of physiognomy in the description of the master and man, both as to body and mind; the one lean and tall, the other round and short; the one heroical and courteous, the other selfish and servile; the one full of high-flown fancies, the other a bag of proverbs; the one always starting some romantic scheme, the other trying to keep to the safe side of custom and tradition. The gradual ascendancy, however, obtained by Don Quixote over Sancho, is as finely managed as it is characteristic. Credulity and a love of the marvellous are as natural to ignorance, as selfishness and cunning. Sancho by degrees becomes a kind of lay-brother of the order; acquires a taste for adventures in his own way, and is made all but an entire convert, by the discovery of the hundred crowns in one of his most comfortless journeys. Towards the end, his regret at being forced to give up the pursuit of knight-errantry, almost equals his master's; and he seizes the proposal of Don Quixote for them to turn shepherds with the greatest avidity—still applying it in his own fashion; for while the Don is ingeniously torturing the names of his humble acquaintance into classical terminations, and contriving scenes of gallantry and song, Sancho exclaims, 'Oh, what delicate wooden spoons shall I carve! what crumbs and cream shall I devour!'—forgetting, in his milk and fruits, the pullets and geese at Camacho's wedding.

This intuitive perception of the hidden analogies of things, or, as it may be called, this *instinct of the imagination*, is, perhaps, what stamps the character of genius on the productions of art more than any other circumstance: for it works unconsciously, like nature, and receives its impressions from a kind of inspiration. There is as much of this indistinct keeping and involuntary unity of purpose in Cervantes, as in any author whatever. Something of the same unsettled, rambling humour extends itself to all the subordinate parts and characters of the work. Thus we find the curate confidentially informing Don Quixote, that if he could get the ear of the government, he has something of considerable importance to propose for the good of the state; and our adventurer afterwards (in the course of his peregrinations) meets with a young gentleman who is a candidate for poetical honours, with a mad lover, a forsaken damsel, a Mahometan lady converted to the Christian faith, &c.—all delineated with the same truth, wildness, and delicacy of fancy. The whole work breathes that air of romance, that aspiration after imaginary

good, that indescribable longing after something more than we possess, that in all places and in all conditions of life,

> '——still prompts the eternal sigh,
> For which we wish to live, or dare to die!'

The leading characters in Don Quixote are strictly individuals; that is, they do not so much belong to, as form a class by themselves. In other words, the actions and manners of the chief *dramatis personæ* do not arise out of the actions and manners of those around them, or the situation of life in which they are placed, but out of the peculiar dispositions of the persons themselves, operated upon by certain impulses of caprice and accident. Yet these impulses are so true to nature, and their operation so exactly described, that we not only recognise the fidelity of the representation, but recognise it with all the advantages of novelty superadded. They are in the best sense *originals*, namely, in the sense in which nature has her originals. They are unlike any thing we have seen before—may be said to be purely ideal; and yet identify themselves more readily with our imagination, and are retained more strongly in memory, than perhaps any others: they are never lost in the crowd. One test of the truth of this ideal painting, is the number of allusions which Don Quixote has furnished to the whole of civilised Europe; that is to say, of appropriate cases and striking illustrations of the universal principles of our nature. The detached incidents and occasional descriptions of human life are more familiar and obvious; so that we have nearly the same insight here given us into the characters of innkeepers, bar-maids, ostlers, and puppet-show men, that we have in Fielding. There is much greater mixture, however, of the pathetic and sentimental with the quaint and humorous, than there ever is in Fielding. I might instance the story of the countryman whom Don Quixote and Sancho met in their doubtful search after Dulcinea, driving his mules to plough at break of day, and 'singing the ancient ballad of Ronscevalles!' The episodes, which are frequently introduced, are excellent, but have, upon the whole, been overrated. They derive their interest from their connexion with the main story. We are so pleased with that, that we are disposed to receive pleasure from every thing else. Compared, for instance, with the serious tales in Boccaccio, they are slight and somewhat superficial. That of Marcella, the fair shepherdess, is, I think, the best. I shall only add, that Don Quixote was, at the time it was published, an entirely original work in its kind, and that the author claims the highest honour which can belong to one, that of being the inventor of a new style of writing. I have never read his Galatea, nor his Loves of

Persiles and Sigismunda, though I have often meant to do it, and I hope to do so yet. Perhaps there is a reason lurking at the bottom of this dilatoriness: I am quite sure the reading of these works could not make me think higher of the author of Don Quixote, and it might, for a moment or two, make me think less.

There is another Spanish novel, Gusman D'Alfarache, nearly of the same age as Don Quixote, and of great genius, though it can hardly be ranked as a novel or a work of imagination. It is a series of strange, unconnected adventures, rather drily told, but accompanied by the most severe and sarcastic commentary. The satire, the wit, the eloquence and reasoning, are of the most potent kind: but they are didactic rather than dramatic. They would suit a homily or a pasquinade as well or better than a romance. Still there are in this extraordinary book occasional sketches of character and humorous descriptions, to which it would be difficult to produce any thing superior. This work, which is hardly known in this country except by name, has the credit, without any reason, of being the original of Gil Blas. There is one incident the same, that of the unsavoury ragout, which is served up for supper at the inn. In all other respects these two works are the very reverse of each other, both in their excellences and defects.—Lazarillo de Tormes has been more read than the Spanish Rogue, and is a work more readable, on this account among others, that it is contained in a duodecimo instead of a folio volume. This, however, is long enough, considering that it treats of only one subject, that of eating, or rather the possibility of living without eating. Famine is here framed into an art, and feasting is banished far hence. The hero's time and thoughts are taken up in a thousand shifts to procure a dinner; and that failing, in tampering with his stomach till supper time, when being forced to go supperless to bed, he comforts himself with the hopes of a breakfast the next morning, of which being again disappointed, he reserves his appetite for a luncheon, and then has to stave it off again by some meagre excuse or other till dinner; and so on, by a perpetual adjournment of this necessary process, through the four and twenty hours round. The quantity of food proper to keep body and soul together is reduced to a *minimum*; and the most uninviting morsels with which Lazarillo meets once a week as a God's-send, are pampered into the most sumptuous fare by a long course of inanition. The scene of this novel could be laid nowhere so properly as in Spain, that land of priestcraft and poverty, where hunger seems to be the ruling passion, and starving the order of the day.

Gil Blas has, next to Don Quixote, been more generally read and admired than any other novel; and in one sense, deservedly so: for

it is at the head of its class, though that class is very different from, and I should say inferior to the other. There is little individual character in Gil Blas. The author is a describer of manners, and not of character. He does not take the elements of human nature, and work them up into new combinations (which is the excellence of Don Quixote); nor trace the peculiar and shifting shades of folly and knavery as they are to be found in real life (like Fielding): but he takes off, as it were, the general, habitual impression which circumstances make on certain conditions of life, and moulds all his characters accordingly. All the persons whom he introduces, carry about with them the badge of their profession; and you see little more of them than their costume. He describes men as belonging to distinct classes in society; not as they are in themselves, or with the individual differences which are always to be discovered in nature. His hero, in particular, has no character but that of the successive circumstances in which he is placed. His priests are only described as priests: his valets, his players, his women, his courtiers and his sharpers, are all alike. Nothing can well exceed the monotony of the work in this respect:—at the same time that nothing can exceed the truth and precision with which the general manners of these different characters are preserved, nor the felicity of the particular traits by which their common foibles are brought out. Thus the Archbishop of Grenada will remain an everlasting memento of the weakness of human vanity; and the account of Gil Blas' legacy, of the uncertainty of human expectations. This novel is also deficient in the fable as well as in the characters. It is not a regularly constructed story; but a series of amusing adventures told with equal gaiety and good sense, and in the most graceful style imaginable.

It has been usual to class our own great novelists as imitators of one or other of these two writers. Fielding, no doubt, is more like Don Quixote than Gil Blas; Smollett is more like Gil Blas than Don Quixote; but there is not much resemblance in either case. Sterne's Tristram Shandy is a more direct instance of imitation. Richardson can scarcely be called an imitator of any one; or if he is, it is of the sentimental refinement of Marivaux, or of the verbose gallantry of the writers of the seventeenth century.

There is very little to warrant the common idea that Fielding was an imitator of Cervantes, except his own declaration of such an intention in the title-page of Joseph Andrews, the romantic turn of the character of Parson Adams (the only romantic character in his works), and the proverbial humour of Partridge, which is kept up only for a few pages. Fielding's novels are, in general, thoroughly his own; and they are thoroughly English. What they are

most remarkable for, is neither sentiment, nor imagination, nor wit, nor even humour, though there is an immense deal of this last quality; but profound knowledge of human nature, at least of English nature; and masterly pictures of the characters of men as he saw them existing. This quality distinguishes all his works, and is shown almost equally in all of them. As a painter of real life, he was equal to Hogarth; as a mere observer of human nature, he was little inferior to Shakspeare, though without any of the genius and poetical qualities of his mind. His humour is less rich and laughable than Smollett's; his wit as often misses as hits; he has none of the fine pathos of Richardson or Sterne; but he has brought together a greater variety of characters in common life, marked with more distinct peculiarities, and without an atom of caricature, than any other novel writer whatever. The extreme subtlety of observation on the springs of human conduct in ordinary characters, is only equalled by the ingenuity of contrivance in bringing those springs into play, in such a manner as to lay open their smallest irregularity. The detection is always complete, and made with the certainty and skill of a philosophical experiment, and the obviousness and familiarity of a casual observation. The truth of the imitation is indeed so great, that it has been argued that Fielding must have had his materials ready-made to his hands, and was merely a transcriber of local manners and individual habits. For this conjecture, however, there seems to be no foundation. His representations, it is true, are local and individual; but they are not the less profound and conclusive. The feeling of the general principles of human nature operating in particular circumstances, is always intense, and uppermost in his mind; and he makes use of incident and situation only to bring out character.

It is scarcely necessary to give any illustrations. Tom Jones is full of them. There is the account, for example, of the gratitude of the elder Blifil to his brother, for assisting him to obtain the fortune of Miss Bridget Alworthy by marriage; and of the gratitude of the poor in his neighbourhood to Alworthy himself, who had done so much good in the country that he had made every one in it his enemy. There is the account of the Latin dialogues between Partridge and his maid, of the assault made on him during one of these by Mrs. Partridge, and the severe bruises he patiently received on that occasion, after which the parish of Little Baddington rung with the story, that the school-master had killed his wife. There is the exquisite keeping in the character of Blifil, and the want of it in that of Jones. There is the gradation in the lovers of Molly Seagrim; the philosopher Square succeeding to Tom Jones, who

again finds that he himself had succeeded to the accomplished Will. Barnes, who had the first possession of her person, and had still possession of her heart, Jones being only the instrument of her vanity, as Square was of her interest. Then there is the discreet honesty of Black George, the learning of Thwackum and Square, and the profundity of Squire Western, who considered it as a physical impossibility that his daughter should fall in love with Tom Jones. We have also that gentleman's disputes with his sister, and the inimitable appeal of that lady to her niece.—'I was never so handsome as you, Sophy: yet I had something of you formerly. I was called the cruel Parthenissa. Kingdoms and states, as Tully Cicero says, undergo alteration, and so must the human form!' The adventure of the same lady with the highwayman, who robbed her of her jewels, while he complimented her beauty, ought not to be passed over, nor that of Sophia and her muff, nor the reserved coquetry of her cousin Fitzpatrick, nor the description of Lady Bellaston, nor the modest overtures of the pretty widow Hunt, nor the indiscreet babblings of Mrs. Honour. The moral of this book has been objected to, without much reason; but a more serious objection has been made to the want of refinement and elegance in two principal characters. We never feel this objection, indeed, while we are reading the book: but at other times, we have something like a lurking suspicion that Jones was but an awkward fellow, and Sophia a pretty simpleton. I do not know how to account for this effect, unless it is that Fielding's constantly assuring us of the beauty of his hero, and the good sense of his heroine, at last produces a distrust of both. The story of Tom Jones is allowed to be unrivalled: and it is this circumstance, together with the vast variety of characters, that has given the history of a Foundling so decided a preference over Fielding's other novels. The characters themselves, both in Amelia and Joseph Andrews, are quite equal to any of those in Tom Jones. The account of Miss Matthews and Ensign Hibbert, in the former of these; the way in which that lady reconciles herself to the death of her father; the inflexible Colonel Bath; the insipid Mrs. James, the complaisant Colonel Trent, the demure, sly, intriguing, equivocal Mrs. Bennet, the lord who is her seducer, and who attempts afterwards to seduce Amelia by the same mechanical process of a concert-ticket, a book, and the disguise of a great coat; his little, fat, short-nosed, red-faced, good-humoured accomplice, the keeper of the lodging-house, who, having no pretensions to gallantry herself, has a disinterested delight in forwarding the intrigues and pleasures of others, (to say nothing of honest Atkinson, the story of the miniature-picture of Amelia, and the hashed mutton, which are in a different

style,) are masterpieces of description. The whole scene at the lodging-house, the masquerade, &c. in Amelia, are equal in interest to the parallel scenes in Tom Jones, and even more refined in the knowledge of character. For instance, Mrs. Bennet is superior to Mrs. Fitzpatrick in her own way. The uncertainty, in which the event of her interview with her former seducer is left, is admirable. Fielding was a master of what may be called the *double entendre* of character, and surprises you no less by what he leaves in the dark, (hardly known to the persons themselves) than by the unexpected discoveries he makes of the real traits and circumstances in a character with which, till then, you find you were unacquainted. There is nothing at all heroic, however, in the usual style of his delineations. He does not draw lofty characters or strong passions; all his persons are of the ordinary stature as to intellect; and possess little elevation of fancy, or energy of purpose. Perhaps, after all, Parson Adams is his finest character. It is equally true to nature, and more ideal than any of the others. Its unsuspecting simplicity makes it not only more amiable, but doubly amusing, by gratifying the sense of superior sagacity in the reader. Our laughing at him does not once lessen our respect for him. His declaring that he would willingly walk ten miles to fetch his sermon on vanity, merely to convince Wilson of his thorough contempt of this vice, and his consoling himself for the loss of his Æschylus, by suddenly recollecting that he could not read it if he had it, because it is dark, are among the finest touches of *naïveté*. The night-adventures at Lady Booby's with Beau Didapper, and the amiable Slipslop, are the most ludicrous; and that with the huntsman, who draws off the hounds from the poor Parson, because they would be spoiled by following *vermin*, the most profound. Fielding did not often repeat himself; but Dr. Harrison, in Amelia, may be considered as a variation of the character of Adams: so also is Goldsmith's Vicar of Wakefield; and the latter part of that work, which sets out so delightfully, an almost entire plagiarism from Wilson's account of himself, and Adams's domestic history.

Smollett's first novel, Roderick Random, which is also his best, appeared about the same time as Fielding's Tom Jones; and yet it has a much more modern air with it: but this may be accounted for, from the circumstance that Smollett was quite a young man at the time, whereas Fielding's manner must have been formed long before. The style of Roderick Random is more easy and flowing than that of Tom Jones; the incidents follow one another more rapidly (though, it must be confessed, they never come in such a throng, or are brought out with the same dramatic effect); the humour is broader, and as effectual; and there is very nearly, if not quite, an

equal interest excited by the story. What then is it that gives the superiority to Fielding? It is the superior insight into the springs of human character, and the constant developement of that character through every change of circumstance. Smollett's humour often arises from the situation of the persons, or the peculiarity of their external appearance; as, from Roderick Random's carrotty locks, which hung down over his shoulders like a pound of candles, or Strap's ignorance of London, and the blunders that follow from it. There is a tone of vulgarity about all his productions. The incidents frequently resemble detached anecdotes taken from a newspaper or magazine; and, like those in Gil Blas, might happen to a hundred other characters. He exhibits the ridiculous accidents and reverses to which human life is liable, not 'the stuff' of which it is composed. He seldom probes to the quick, or penetrates beyond the surface; and, therefore, he leaves no stings in the minds of his readers, and in this respect is far less interesting than Fielding. His novels always enliven, and never tire us: we take them up with pleasure, and lay them down without any strong feeling of regret. We look on and laugh, as spectators of a highly amusing scene, without closing in with the combatants, or being made parties in the event. We read Roderick Random as an entertaining story; for the particular accidents and modes of life which it describes have ceased to exist: but we regard Tom Jones as a real history; because the author never stops short of those essential principles which lie at the bottom of all our actions, and in which we feel an immediate interest—*intus et in cute*. Smollett excels most as the lively caricaturist: Fielding as the exact painter and profound metaphysician. I am far from maintaining that this account applies uniformly to the productions of these two writers; but I think that, as far as they essentially differ, what I have stated is the general distinction between them. Roderick Random is the purest of Smollett's novels: I mean in point of style and description. Most of the incidents and characters are supposed to have been taken from the events of his own life; and are, therefore, truer to nature. There is a rude conception of generosity in some of his characters, of which Fielding seems to have been incapable, his amiable persons being merely good-natured. It is owing to this that Strap is superior to Partridge; as there is a heartiness and warmth of feeling in some of the scenes between Lieutenant Bowling and his nephew, which is beyond Fielding's power of impassioned writing. The whole of the scene on ship-board is a most admirable and striking picture, and, I imagine, very little if at all exaggerated, though the interest it excites is of a very unpleasant kind, because the irritation and resistance to petty oppression can be of no avail. The picture of

the little profligate French friar, who was Roderick's travelling companion, and of whom he always kept to the windward, is one of Smollett's most masterly sketches.—Peregrine Pickle is no great favourite of mine, and Launcelot Greaves was not worthy of the genius of the author.

Humphry Clinker and Count Fathom are both equally admirable in their way. Perhaps the former is the most pleasant gossiping novel that ever was written; that which gives the most pleasure with the least effort to the reader. It is quite as amusing as going the journey could have been; and we have just as good an idea of what happened on the road, as if we had been of the party. Humphry Clinker himself is exquisite; and his sweetheart, Winifred Jenkins, not much behind him. Matthew Bramble, though not altogether original, is excellently supported, and seems to have been the prototype of Sir Anthony Absolute in the Rivals. But Lismahago is the flower of the flock. His tenaciousness in argument is not so delightful as the relaxation of his logical severity, when he finds his fortune mellowing in the wintry smiles of Mrs. Tabitha Bramble. This is the best preserved, and most severe of all Smollett's characters. The resemblance to Don Quixote is only just enough to make it interesting to the critical reader, without giving offence to any body else. The indecency and filth in this novel, are what must be allowed to all Smollett's writings.—The subject and characters in Count Fathom are, in general, exceedingly disgusting: the story is also spun out to a degree of tediousness in the serious and sentimental parts; but there is more power of writing occasionally shewn in it than in any of his works. I need only to refer to the fine and bitter irony of the Count's address to the country of his ancestors on his landing in England; to the robber scene in the forest, which has never been surpassed; to the Parisian swindler who personates a raw English country squire (Western is tame in the comparison); and to the story of the seduction in the west of England. It would be difficult to point out, in any author, passages written with more force and mastery than these.

It is not a very difficult undertaking to class Fielding or Smollett; —the one as an observer of the characters of human life, the other as a describer of its various eccentricities. But it is by no means so easy to dispose of Richardson, who was neither an observer of the one, nor a describer of the other; but who seemed to spin his materials entirely out of his own brain, as if there had been nothing existing in the world beyond the little room in which he sat writing. There is an artificial reality about his works, which is no where else to be met with. They have the romantic air of a pure fiction, with

the literal minuteness of a common diary. The author had the strongest matter-of-fact imagination that ever existed, and wrote the oddest mixture of poetry and prose. He does not appear to have taken advantage of any thing in actual nature, from one end of his works to the other; and yet, throughout all his works, voluminous as they are—(and this, to be sure, is one reason why they are so,)—he sets about describing every object and transaction, as if the whole had been given in on evidence by an eye-witness. This kind of high finishing from imagination is an anomaly in the history of human genius; and, certainly, nothing so fine was ever produced by the same accumulation of minute parts. There is not the least distraction, the least forgetfulness of the end: every circumstance is made to tell. I cannot agree that this exactness of detail produces heaviness; on the contrary, it gives an appearance of truth, and a positive interest to the story; and we listen with the same attention as we should to the particulars of a confidential communication. I at one time used to think some parts of Sir Charles Grandison rather trifling and tedious, especially the long description of Miss Harriet Byron's wedding clothes, till I was told of two young ladies who had severally copied out the whole of that very description for their own private gratification. After that, I could not blame the author.

The effect of reading this work is like an increase of kindred. You find yourself all of a sudden introduced into the midst of a large family, with aunts and cousins to the third and fourth generation, and grandmothers both by the father's and mother's side;—and a very odd set of people they are, but people whose real existence and personal identity you can no more dispute than your own senses, for you see and hear all that they do or say. What is still more extraordinary, all this extreme elaborateness in working out the story, seems to have cost the author nothing; for it is said, that the published works are mere abridgments. I have heard (though this I suspect must be a pleasant exaggeration) that Sir Charles Grandison was originally written in eight and twenty volumes.

Pamela is the first of Richardson's productions, and the very child of his brain. Taking the general idea of the character of a modest and beautiful country girl, and of the ordinary situation in which she is placed, he makes out all the rest, even to the smallest circumstance, by the mere force of a reasoning imagination. It would seem as if a step lost, would be as fatal here as in a mathematical demonstration. The developement of the character is the most simple, and comes the nearest to nature that it can do, without being the same thing. The interest of the story increases with the dawn of understanding and reflection in the heroine: her sentiments gradually expand themselves,

like opening flowers. She writes better every time, and acquires a confidence in herself, just as a girl would do, writing such letters in such circumstances; and yet it is certain *that no girl would write such letters in such circumstances.* What I mean is this:—Richardson's nature is always the nature of sentiment and reflection, not of impulse or situation. He furnishes his characters, on every occasion, with the presence of mind of the author. He makes them act, not as they would from the impulse of the moment, but as they might upon reflection, and upon a careful review of every motive and circumstance in their situation. They regularly sit down to write letters: and if the business of life consisted in letter-writing, and was carried on by the post (like a Spanish game at chess), human nature would be what Richardson represents it. All actual objects and feelings are blunted and deadened by being presented through a medium which may be true to reason, but is false in nature. He confounds his own point of view with that of the immediate actors in the scene; and hence presents you with a conventional and factitious nature, instead of that which is real. Dr. Johnson seems to have preferred this truth of reflection to the truth of nature, when he said that there was more knowledge of the human heart in a page of Richardson, than in all Fielding. Fielding, however, saw more of the practical results, and understood the principles as well; but he had not the same power of speculating upon their possible results, and combining them in certain ideal forms of passion and imagination, which was Richardson's real excellence.

It must be observed, however, that it is this mutual good understanding, and comparing of notes between the author and the persons he describes; his infinite circumspection, his exact process of ratiocination and calculation, which gives such an appearance of coldness and formality to most of his characters,—which makes prudes of his women, and coxcombs of his men. Every thing is too conscious in his works. Every thing is distinctly brought home to the mind of the actors in the scene, which is a fault undoubtedly: but then it must be confessed, every thing is brought home in its full force to the mind of the reader also; and we feel the same interest in the story as if it were our own. Can any thing be more beautiful or more affecting than Pamela's reproaches to her 'lumpish heart,' when she is sent away from her master's at her own request; its lightness, when she is sent for back; the joy which the conviction of the sincerity of his love diffuses in her heart, like the coming on of spring; the artifice of the stuff gown; the meeting with Lady Davers after her marriage; and the trial-scene with her husband? Who ever remained insensible to the passion of Lady Clementina,

except Sir Charles Grandison himself, who was the object of it? Clarissa is, however, his masterpiece, if we except Lovelace. If she is fine in herself, she is still finer in his account of her. With that foil, her purity is dazzling indeed: and she who could triumph by her virtue, and the force of her love, over the regality of Lovelace's mind, his wit, his person, his accomplishments, and his spirit, conquers all hearts. I should suppose that never sympathy more deep or sincere was excited than by the heroine of Richardson's romance, except by the calamities of real life. The links in this wonderful chain of interest are not more finely wrought, than their whole weight is overwhelming and irresistible. Who can forget the exquisite gradations of her long dying-scene, or the closing of the coffin-lid, when Miss Howe comes to take her last leave of her friend; or the heart-breaking reflection that Clarissa makes on what was to have been her wedding-day? Well does a certain writer exclaim—

'Books are a real world, both pure and good,
Round which, with tendrils strong as flesh and blood,
Our pastime and our happiness may grow!'

Richardson's wit was unlike that of any other writer—his humour was so too. Both were the effect of intense activity of mind—laboured, and yet completely effectual. I might refer to Lovelace's reception and description of Hickman, when he calls out Death in his ear, as the name of the person with whom Clarissa had fallen in love; and to the scene at the glove-shop. What can be more magnificent than his enumeration of his companions—'Belton, so pert and so pimply—Tourville, so fair and so foppish!' &c. In casuistry this author is quite at home; and, with a boldness greater even than his puritanical severity, has exhausted every topic on virtue and vice. There is another peculiarity in Richardson, not perhaps so uncommon, which is, his systematically preferring his most insipid characters to his finest, though both were equally his own invention, and he must be supposed to have understood something of their qualities. Thus he preferred the little, selfish, affected, insignificant Miss Byron, to the divine Clementina; and again, Sir Charles Grandison, to the nobler Lovelace. I have nothing to say in favour of Lovelace's morality; but Sir Charles is the prince of coxcombs,—whose eye was never once taken from his own person, and his own virtues; and there is nothing which excites so little sympathy as this excessive egotism.

It remains to speak of Sterne; and I shall do it in few words. There is more of *mannerism* and affectation in him, and a more

immediate reference to preceding authors; but his excellences, where he is excellent, are of the first order. His characters are intellectual and inventive, like Richardson's; but totally opposite in the execution. The one are made out by continuity, and patient repetition of touches: the others, by glancing transitions and graceful apposition. His style is equally different from Richardson's: it is at times the most rapid, the most happy, the most idiomatic of any that is to be found. It is the pure essence of English conversational style. His works consist only of *morceaux*—of brilliant passages. I wonder that Goldsmith, who ought to have known better, should call him 'a dull fellow.' His wit is poignant, though artificial; and his characters (though the groundwork of some of them had been laid before) have yet invaluable original differences; and the spirit of the execution, the master-strokes constantly thrown into them, are not to be surpassed. It is sufficient to name them;—Yorick, Dr. Slop, Mr. Shandy, My Uncle Toby, Trim, Susanna, and the Widow Wadman. In these he has contrived to oppose, with equal felicity and originality, two characters, one of pure intellect, and the other of pure good nature, in My Father and My Uncle Toby. There appears to have been in Sterne a vein of dry, sarcastic humour, and of extreme tenderness of feeling; the latter sometimes carried to affectation, as in the tale of Maria, and the apostrophe to the recording angel: but at other times pure, and without blemish. The story of Le Fevre is perhaps the finest in the English language. My Father's restlessness, both of body and mind, is inimitable. It is the model from which all those despicable performances against modern philosophy ought to have been copied, if their authors had known any thing of the subject they were writing about. My Uncle Toby is one of the finest compliments ever paid to human nature. He is the most unoffending of God's creatures; or, as the French express it, *un tel petit bon homme*! Of his bowling-green, his sieges, and his amours, who would say or think any thing amiss!

It is remarkable that our four best novel-writers belong nearly to the same age. We also owe to the same period (the reign of George II.) the inimitable Hogarth, and some of our best writers of the middle style of comedy. If I were called upon to account for this coincidence, I should wave the consideration of more general causes, and ascribe it at once to the establishment of the Protestant ascendancy, and the succession of the House of Hanover. These great events appear to have given a more popular turn to our literature and genius, as well as to our government. It was found high time that the people should be represented in books as well as in Parliament. They wished to see some account of themselves in what they

read; and not to be confined always to the vices, the miseries, and frivolities of the great. Our domestic tragedy, and our earliest periodical works, appeared a little before the same period. In despotic countries, human nature is not of sufficient importance to be studied or described. The *canaille* are objects rather of disgust than curiosity; and there are no middle classes. The works of Racine and Moliere are either imitations of the verbiage of the court, before which they were represented, or fanciful caricatures of the manners of the lowest of the people. But in the period of our history in question, a security of person and property, and a freedom of opinion had been established, which made every man feel of some consequence to himself, and appear an object of some curiosity to his neighbours: our manners became more domesticated; there was a general spirit of sturdiness and independence, which made the English character more truly English than perhaps at any other period—that is, more tenacious of its own opinions and purposes. The whole surface of society appeared cut out into square enclosures and sharp angles, which extended to the dresses of the time, their gravel-walks, and clipped hedges. Each individual had a certain ground-plot of his own to cultivate his particular humours in, and let them shoot out at pleasure; and a most plentiful crop they have produced accordingly. The reign of George II. was, in a word, the age of *hobby-horses*: but, since that period, things have taken a different turn.

His present Majesty (God save the mark!) during almost the whole of his reign, has been constantly mounted on a great war-horse; and has fairly driven all competitors out of the field. Instead of minding our own affairs, or laughing at each other, the eyes of all his faithful subjects have been fixed on the career of the sovereign, and all hearts anxious for the safety of his person and government. Our pens and our swords have been alike drawn in their defence; and the returns of killed and wounded, the manufacture of newspapers and parliamentary speeches, have exceeded all former example. If we have had little of the blessings of peace, we have had enough of the glories and calamities of war. His Majesty has indeed contrived to keep alive the greatest public interest ever known, by his determined manner of riding his hobby for half a century together, with the aristocracy, the democracy, the clergy, the landed and monied interest, and the rabble, in full cry after him;—and at the end of his career, most happily and unexpectedly succeeded, amidst empires lost and won, kingdoms overturned and created, and the destruction of an incredible number of lives, in restoring *the divine right of kings*, and thus preventing any future abuse of the example which seated his family on the throne!

ON THE ENGLISH NOVELISTS

It is not to be wondered at, if amidst the tumult of events crowded into this period, our literature has partaken of the disorder of the time; if our prose has run mad, and our poetry grown childish. Among those persons who 'have kept the even tenor of their way,' the author of Evelina, Cecilia, and Camilla, must be allowed to hold a distinguished place.[1] Mrs. Radcliffe's 'enchantments drear,' and mouldering castles, derived part of their interest, no doubt, from the supposed tottering state of all old structures at the time; and Mrs. Inchbald's 'Nature and Art' would scarcely have had the same popularity, but that it fell in (as to its two main characters) with the prevailing prejudice of the moment, that judges and bishops were not invariably pure abstractions of justice and piety. Miss Edgeworth's Tales again (with the exception of Castle Rack-rent, which is a genuine, unsophisticated, national portrait) are a kind of pedantic, pragmatical common sense, tinctured with the pertness and pretensions of the paradoxes to which they are so self-complacently opposed. Madame D'Arblay is, on the contrary, quite of the old school, a mere common observer of manners, and also a very woman. It is this last circumstance which forms the peculiarity of her writings, and distinguishes them from those masterpieces which I have before mentioned. She is a quick, lively, and accurate observer of persons and things; but she always looks at them with a consciousness of her sex, and in that point of view in which it is the particular business and interest of women to observe them. There is little in her works of passion or character, or even manners, in the most extended sense of the word, as implying the sum-total of our habits and pursuits; her *forte* is in describing the absurdities and affectations of external behaviour, or *the manners of people in company*. Her characters, which are ingenious caricatures, are, no doubt, distinctly marked, and well kept up; but they are slightly shaded, and exceedingly uniform. Her heroes and heroines, almost all of them, depend on the stock of a single phrase or sentiment, and have certain mottoes or devices by which they may always be known. They form such characters as people might be supposed to assume for a night at a masquerade. She presents, not the whole-length figure, nor even the face, but some prominent feature. In one of her novels, for example, a lady appears regularly every ten pages, to get a lesson in music for nothing. She never appears for any other purpose; this is all you know of her; and in this the whole wit and humour of the character consists. Meadows is the same, who has always the cue of being tired, without

[1] The Fool of Quality, David Simple, and Sidney Biddulph, written about the middle of the last century, belong to the ancient *regime* of novel-writing. Of the Vicar of Wakefield I have attempted a character elsewhere.

any other idea. It has been said of Shakspeare, that you may always assign his speeches to the proper characters;—and you may infallibly do the same thing with Madame D'Arblay's, for they always say the same thing. The Branghtons are the best. Mr. Smith is an exquisite city portrait. Evelina is also her best novel, because it is the shortest; that is, it has all the liveliness in the sketches of character, and smartness of common dialogue and repartee, without the tediousness of the story, and endless affectation of sentiment which disfigures the others.

Women, in general, have a quicker perception of any oddity or singularity of character than men, and are more alive to every absurdity which arises from a violation of the rules of society, or a deviation from established custom. This partly arises from the restraints on their own behaviour, which turn their attention constantly on the subject, and partly from other causes. The surface of their minds, like that of their bodies, seems of a finer texture than ours; more soft, and susceptible of immediate impulses. They have less muscular strength; less power of continued voluntary attention—of reason, passion, and imagination: but they are more easily impressed with whatever appeals to their senses or habitual prejudices. The intuitive perception of their minds is less disturbed by any abstruse reasonings on causes or consequences. They learn the idiom of character and manners, as they acquire that of language, by rote, without troubling themselves about the principles. Their observation is not the less accurate on that account, as far as it goes; for it has been well said, that 'there is nothing so true as habit.'

There is little other power in Miss Burney's novels, than that of immediate observation: her characters, whether of refinement or vulgarity, are equally superficial and confined. The whole is a question of form, whether that form is adhered to or infringed upon. It is this circumstance which takes away dignity and interest from her story and sentiments, and makes the one so teazing and tedious, and the other so insipid. The difficulties in which she involves her heroines are too much 'Female Difficulties'; they are difficulties created out of nothing. The author appears to have no other idea of refinement than that it is the reverse of vulgarity; but the reverse of vulgarity is fastidiousness and affectation. There is a true and a false delicacy. Because a vulgar country Miss would answer 'yes' to a proposal of marriage in the first page, Madame D'Arblay makes it a proof of an excess of refinement, and an indispensable point of etiquette in her young ladies, to postpone the answer to the end of five volumes, without the smallest reason for their doing so, and with

every reason to the contrary. The reader is led every moment to expect a *denouement*, and is as often disappointed on some trifling pretext. The whole artifice of her fable consists in coming to no conclusion. Her ladies 'stand so upon the order of their going,' that they do not go at all. They will not abate an ace of their punctilio in any circumstances, or on any emergency. They would consider it as quite indecorous to run down stairs though the house were in flames, or to move an inch off the pavement though a scaffolding was falling. She has formed to herself an abstract idea of perfection in common behaviour, which is quite as romantic and impracticable as any other idea of the sort: and the consequence has naturally been, that she makes her heroines commit the greatest improprieties and absurdities in order to avoid the smallest. In opposition to a maxim in philosophy, they constantly act from the weakest motive, or rather from pure contradiction. The whole tissue of the fable is, in general, more wild and chimerical than any thing in Don Quixote, without the poetical truth or elevation. Madame D'Arblay has woven a web of difficulties for her heroines, something like the green silken threads in which the shepherdesses entangled the steed of Cervantes's hero, who swore, in his fine enthusiastic way, that he would sooner cut his passage to another world than disturb the least of those beautiful meshes. To mention the most painful instance—the Wanderer, in her last novel, raises obstacles, lighter than 'the gossamer that idles in the wanton summer air,' into insurmountable barriers; and trifles with those that arise out of common sense, reason, and necessity. Her conduct is not to be accounted for directly out of the circumstances in which she is placed, but out of some factitious and misplaced refinement on them. It is a perpetual game at cross-purposes. There being a plain and strong motive why she should pursue any course of action, is a sufficient reason for her to avoid it; and the perversity of her conduct is in proportion to its levity—as the lightness of the feather baffles the force of the impulse that is given to it, and the slightest breath of air turns it back on the hand from which it is thrown. We can hardly consider this as the perfection of the female character!

I must say I like Mrs. Radcliffe's romances better, and think of them oftener;—and even when I do not, part of the impression with which I survey the full-orbed moon shining in the blue expanse of heaven, or hear the wind sighing through autumnal leaves, or walk under the echoing archways of a Gothic ruin, is owing to a repeated perusal of the Romance of the Forest and the Mysteries of Udolpho. Her descriptions of scenery, indeed, are vague and wordy to the last degree; they are neither like Salvator nor Claude, nor nature nor

art; and she dwells on the effects of moonlight till we are sometimes weary of them: her characters are insipid, the shadows of a shade, continued on, under different names, through all her novels: her story comes to nothing. But in harrowing up the soul with imaginary horrors, and making the flesh creep, and the nerves thrill, with fond hopes and fears, she is unrivalled among her fair country-women. Her great power lies in describing the indefinable, and embodying a phantom. She makes her readers twice children: and from the dim and shadowy veil which she draws over the objects of her fancy, forces us to believe all that is strange, and next to impossible, of their mysterious agency:—whether it is the sound of the lover's lute borne o'er the distant waters along the winding shores of Provence, recalling, with its magic breath, some long-lost friendship, or some hopeless love; or the full choir of the cloistered monks, chaunting their midnight orgies, or the lonely voice of an unhappy sister in her pensive cell, like angels' whispered music; or the deep sigh that steals from a dungeon on the startled ear; or the dim apparition of ghastly features; or the face of an assassin hid beneath a monk's cowl; or the robber gliding through the twilight gloom of the forest. All the fascination that links the world of passion to the world unknown, is hers, and she plays with it at her pleasure: she has all the poetry of romance, all that is obscure, visionary, and objectless, in the imagination. It seems that the simple notes of Clara's lute, which so delighted her youthful heart, still echo among the rocks and mountains of the Valois; the mellow tones of the minstrel's songs still mingle with the noise of the dashing oar, and the rippling of the silver waves of the Mediterranean; the voice of Agnes is heard from the haunted tower; and Schedoni's form still stalks through the frowning ruins of Palinzi. The greatest treat, however, which Mrs. Radcliffe's pen has provided for the lovers of the marvellous and terrible, is the Provençal tale which Ludovico reads in the Castle of Udolpho, as the lights are beginning to burn blue, and just before the faces appear from behind the tapestry that carry him off, and we hear no more of him. This tale is of a knight, who being engaged in a dance at some high festival of old romance, was summoned out by another knight clad in complete steel; and being solemnly adjured to follow him into the mazes of the neighbouring wood, his conductor brought him at length to a hollow glade in the thickest part, where he pointed to the murdered corse of another knight, and lifting up his beaver, shewed him by the gleam of moonlight which fell on it, that it had the face of his spectre-guide! The dramatic power in the character of Schedoni, the Italian monk, has been much admired and praised; but the effect does not depend upon the character, but the situations;

not upon the figure, but upon the back-ground.—The Castle of Otranto (which is supposed to have led the way to this style of writing) is, to my notion, dry, meagre, and without effect. It is done upon false principles of taste. The great hand and arm, which are thrust into the court-yard, and remain there all day long, are the pasteboard machinery of a pantomime; they shock the senses, and have no purchase upon the imagination. They are a matter-of-fact impossibility; a fixture, and no longer a phantom. *Quod sic mihi ostendis, incredulus odi.* By realising the chimeras of ignorance and fear, begot upon shadows and dim likenesses, we take away the very grounds of credulity and superstition; and, as in other cases, by facing out the imposture, betray the secret to the contempt and laughter of the spectators. The Recess and the Old English Baron are also 'dismal treatises,' but with little in them 'at which our fell of hair is likely to rouse and stir as life were in it.' They are dull and prosing, without the spirit of fiction, or the air of tradition to make them interesting. After Mrs. Radcliffe, Monk Lewis was the greatest master of the art of freezing the blood. The robber-scene in the Monk is only inferior to that in Count Fathom, and perfectly new in the circumstances and cast of the characters. Some of his descriptions are chargeable with unpardonable grossness, but the pieces of poetry interspersed in this far-famed novel, such as the fight of Ronscevalles and the Exile, in particular, have a romantic and delightful harmony, such as might be chaunted by the moonlight pilgrim, or might lull the dreaming mariner on summer-seas.

If Mrs. Radcliffe touched the trembling chords of the imagination, making wild music there, Mrs. Inchbald has no less power over the springs of the heart. She not only moves the affections, but melts us into 'all the luxury of woe.' Her 'Nature and Art' is one of the most pathetic and interesting stories in the world. It is, indeed, too much so; or the distress is too naked, and the situations hardly to be borne with patience. I think nothing, however, can exceed in delicacy and beauty the account of the love-letter which the poor girl, who is the subject of the story, receives from her lover, and which she is a fortnight in spelling out, sooner than shew it to any one else; nor the dreadful catastrophe of the last fatal scene, in which the same poor creature, as her former seducer, now become her judge, is about to pronounce sentence of death upon her, cries out in agony—'Oh, not from you!' The effect of this novel upon the feelings, is not only of the most distressing, but withering kind. It blights the sentiments, and haunts the memory. The Simple Story is not much better in this respect: the gloom, however, which hangs over it, is of a more fixed and tender kind: we are not now

lifted to ecstacy, only to be plunged in madness; and besides the sweetness and dignity of some of the characters, there are redeeming traits, retrospective glances on the course of human life, which brighten the backward stream, and smile in hope or patience to the last. Such is the account of Sandford, her stern and inflexible adviser, sitting by the bedside of Miss Miller, and comforting her in her dying moments; thus softening the worst pang of human nature, and reconciling us to the best, but not most shining virtues in human character. The conclusion of Nature and Art, on the contrary, is a scene of heartless desolation, which must effectually deter any one from ever reading the book twice. Mrs. Inchbald is an instance to confute the assertion of Rousseau, that women fail whenever they attempt to describe the passion of love.

I shall conclude this Lecture, by saying a few words of the author of Caleb Williams, and the author of Waverley. I shall speak of the last first. In knowledge, in variety, in facility, in truth of painting, in costume and scenery, in freshness of subject and in untired interest, in glancing lights and the graces of a style passing at will from grave to gay, from lively to severe, at once romantic and familiar, having the utmost force of imitation and apparent freedom of invention; these novels have the highest claims to admiration. What lack they yet? The author has all power given him from without—he has not, perhaps, an equal power from within. The intensity of the feeling is not equal to the distinctness of the imagery. He sits like a magician in his cell, and conjures up all shapes and sights to the view; and with a little variation we might apply to him what Spenser says of Fancy:—

> 'His chamber was dispainted all within
> With sundry colours, in the which were writ
> Infinite shapes of things dispersed thin;
> Some such as in the world were never yet;
> Some daily seen and knowen by their names,
> Such as in idle fantasies do flit;
> Infernal hags, centaurs, fiends, hippodames,
> Apes, lions, eagles, owls, fools, lovers, children, dames.'

In the midst of all this phantasmagoria, the author himself never appears to take part with his characters, to prompt our affection to the good, or sharpen our antipathy to the bad. It is the perfection of art to conceal art; and this is here done so completely, that while it adds to our pleasure in the work, it seems to take away from the merit of the author. As he does not thrust himself forward in the foreground, he loses the credit of the performance. The copies are so true to nature, that they appear like tapestry figures

taken off by the pattern; the obvious patchwork of tradition and history. His characters are transplanted at once from their native soil to the page which we are reading, without any traces of their having passed through the hot-bed of the author's genius or vanity. He leaves them as he found them; but this is doing wonders. The Laird and the Baillie of Bradwardine, the idiot rhymer David Gellatly, Miss Rose Bradwardine, and Miss Flora Mac Ivor, her brother the Highland Jacobite chieftain, Vich Ian Vohr, the Highland rover, Donald Bean Lean, and the worthy page Callum Beg, Bothwell, and Balfour of Burley, Claverhouse and Macbriar, Elshie, the Black Dwarf, and the Red Reever of Westburn Flat, Hobbie and Grace Armstrong, Ellen Gowan and Dominie Sampson, Dirk Hatteraick and Meg Merrilees, are at present 'familiar in our mouths as household names,' and whether they are actual persons or creations of the poet's pen, is an impertinent inquiry. The picturesque and local scenery is as fresh as the lichen on the rock: the characters are a part of the scenery. If they are put in action, it is a moving picture: if they speak, we hear their dialect and the tones of their voice. If the humour is made out by dialect, the character by the dress, the interest by the facts and documents in the author's possession, we have no right to complain, if it is made out; but sometimes it hardly is, and then we have a right to say so. For instance, in the Tales of my Landlord, Canny Elshie is not in himself so formidable or petrific a person as the real Black Dwarf, called David Ritchie, nor are his acts or sayings so staggering to the imagination. Again, the first introduction of this extraordinary personage, groping about among the hoary twilight ruins of the Witch of Micklestane Moor and her Grey Geese, is as full of preternatural power and bewildering effect (according to the tradition of the country) as can be; while the last decisive scene, where the Dwarf, in his resumed character of Sir Edward Mauley, comes from the tomb in the chapel, to prevent the forced marriage of the daughter of his former betrothed mistress with the man she abhors, is altogether powerless and tame. No situation could be imagined more finely calculated to call forth an author's powers of imagination and passion; but nothing is done. The assembly is dispersed under circumstances of the strongest natural feeling, and the most appalling preternatural appearances, just as if the effect had been produced by a peace-officer entering for the same purpose. These instances of a falling off are, however, rare; and if this author should not be supposed by fastidious critics to have original genius in the highest degree, he has other qualities which supply its place so well, his materials are so rich and varied, and he uses them so lavishly, that the reader is no loser by the exchange. . We are not

in fear that he should publish another novel; we are under no apprehension of his exhausting himself, for he has shewn that he is inexhaustible.

Whoever else is, it is pretty clear that the author of Caleb Williams and St. Leon is not the author of Waverley. Nothing can be more distinct or excellent in their several ways than these two writers. If the one owes almost every thing to external observation and traditional character, the other owes every thing to internal conception and contemplation of the possible workings of the human mind. There is little knowledge of the world, little variety, neither an eye for the picturesque, nor a talent for the humorous in Caleb Williams, for instance, but you cannot doubt for a moment of the originality of the work and the force of the conception. The impression made upon the reader is the exact measure of the strength of the author's genius. For the effect, both in Caleb Williams and St. Leon, is entirely made out, neither by facts, nor dates, by black-letter or magazine learning, by transcript nor record, but by intense and patient study of the human heart, and by an imagination projecting itself into certain situations, and capable of working up its imaginary feelings to the height of reality. The author launches into the ideal world, and must sustain himself and the reader there by the mere force of imagination. The sense of power in the writer thus adds to the interest of the subject.—The character of Falkland is a sort of apotheosis of the love of fame. The gay, the gallant Falkland lives only in the good opinion of good men; for this he adorns his soul with virtue, and tarnishes it with crime; he lives only for this, and dies as he loses it. He is a lover of virtue, but a worshipper of fame. Stung to madness by a brutal insult, he avenges himself by a crime of the deepest die, and the remorse of his conscience and the stain upon his honour prey upon his peace and reason ever after. It was into the mouth of such a character that a modern poet has well put the words,

> '—— Action is momentary,
> The motion of a muscle, this way or that;
> Suffering is long, obscure, and infinite.'

In the conflict of his feelings, he is worn to a skeleton, wasted to a shadow. But he endures this living death to watch over his undying reputation, and to preserve his name unsullied and free from suspicion. But he is at last disappointed in this his darling object, by the very means he takes to secure it, and by harassing and goading Caleb Williams (whose insatiable, incessant curiosity had wormed itself into his confidence) to a state of desperation, by employing every sort of

persecution, and by trying to hunt him from society like an infection, makes him turn upon him, and betray the inmost secret of his soul. The last moments of Falkland are indeed sublime: the spark of life and the hope of imperishable renown are extinguished in him together; and bending his last look of forgiveness on his victim and destroyer, he dies a martyr to fame, but a confessor at the shrine of virtue! The re-action and play of these two characters into each other's hands (like Othello and Iago) is inimitably well managed, and on a par with any thing in the dramatic art; but Falkland is the hero of the story, Caleb Williams is only the instrument of it. This novel is utterly unlike any thing else that ever was written, and is one of the most original as well as powerful productions in the English language. —St. Leon is not equal to it in the plot and ground-work, though perhaps superior in the execution. In the one Mr. Godwin has hit upon the extreme point of the perfectly natural and perfectly new; in the other he ventures into the preternatural world, and comes nearer to the world of common place. Still the character is of the same exalted intellectual kind. As the ruling passion of the one was the love of fame, so in the other the sole business of life is thought. Raised by the fatal discovery of the philosopher's stone above mortality, he is cut off from all participation with its pleasures. He is a limb torn from society. In possession of eternal youth and beauty, he can feel no love; surrounded, tantalized, tormented with riches, he can do no good. The races of men pass before him as in a *speculum*; but he is attached to them by no common tie of sympathy or suffering. He is thrown back into himself and his own thoughts. He lives in the solitude of his own breast,—without wife or child, or friend, or enemy in the world. His is the solitude of the soul,—not of woods, or seas, or mountains,—but the desart of society, the waste and desolation of the heart. He is himself alone. His existence is purely contemplative, and is therefore intolerable to one who has felt the rapture of affection or the anguish of woe. The contrast between the enthusiastic eagerness of human pursuits and their blank disappointment, was never, perhaps, more finely pourtrayed than in this novel. Marguerite, the wife of St. Leon, is an instance of pure and disinterested affection in one of the noblest of her sex. It is not improbable that the author found the model of this character in nature.—Of Mandeville, I shall say only one word. It appears to me to be a falling off in the subject, not in the ability. The style and declamation are even more powerful than ever. But unless an author surpasses himself, and surprises the public as much the fourth or fifth time as he did the first, he is said to fall off, because there is not the same stimulus of novelty. A great deal is

here made out of nothing, or out of a very disagreeable subject. I cannot agree that the story is out of nature. The feeling is very common indeed; though carried to an unusual and improbable excess, or to one with which from the individuality and minuteness of the circumstances, we cannot readily sympathise.

It is rare that a philosopher is a writer of romances. The union of the two characters in this author is a sort of phenomenon in the history of letters; for I cannot but consider the author of Political Justice as a philosophical reasoner of no ordinary stamp or pretensions. That work, whatever its defects may be, is distinguished by the most acute and severe logic, and by the utmost boldness of thinking, founded on a love and conviction of truth. It is a system of ethics, and one that, though I think it erroneous myself, is built on following up into its fair consequences, a very common and acknowledged principle, that abstract reason and general utility are the only test and standard of moral rectitude. If this principle is true, then the system is true: but I think that Mr. Godwin's book has done more than any thing else to overturn the sufficiency of this principle by abstracting, in a strict metaphysical process, the influence of reason or the understanding in moral questions and relations from that of habit, sense, association, local and personal attachment, natural affection, &c.; and by thus making it appear how necessary the latter are to our limited, imperfect, and mixed being, how impossible the former as an exclusive guide of action, unless man were, or were capable of becoming, a purely intellectual being. Reason is no doubt one faculty of the human mind, and the chief gift of Providence to man; but it must itself be subject to and modified by other instincts and principles, because it is not the only one. This work then, even supposing it to be false, is invaluable as demonstrating an important truth by the *reductio ad absurdum*; or it is an *experimentum crucis* in one of the grand and trying questions of moral philosophy.—In delineating the character and feelings of the hermetic philosopher St. Leon, perhaps the author had not far to go from those of a speculative philosophical Recluse. He who deals in the secrets of magic, or in the secrets of the human mind, is too often looked upon with jealous eyes by the world, which is no great conjuror; he who pours out his intellectual wealth into the lap of the public, is hated by those who cannot understand how he came by it; he who thinks beyond his age, cannot expect the feelings of his contemporaries to go along with him; he whose mind is of no age or country, is seldom properly recognised during his life-time, and must wait, in order to have justice done him, for the late but lasting award of posterity:—'Where his treasure is, there his heart is also.'

ON THE WORKS OF HOGARTH, ETC.

LECTURE VII

ON THE WORKS OF HOGARTH.—ON THE GRAND AND FAMILIAR STYLE OF PAINTING

If the quantity of amusement, or of matter for more serious reflection which their works have afforded, is that by which we are to judge of precedence among the intellectual benefactors of mankind, there are, perhaps, few persons who can put in a stronger claim to our gratitude than Hogarth. It is not hazarding too much to assert, that he was one of the greatest comic geniuses that ever lived, and he was certainly one of the most extraordinary men this country has produced. The wonderful knowledge which he possessed of human life and manners, is only to be surpassed (if it can be) by the power of invention with which he has combined and contrasted his materials in the most ludicrous and varied points of view, and by the mastery of execution with which he has embodied and made tangible the very thoughts and passing movements of the mind. Critics sometimes object to the style of Hogarth's pictures, or to the class to which they belong. First, he belongs to no class, or if he does, it is to the same class as Fielding, Smollett, Vanbrugh, and Moliere. Besides, the merit of his pictures does not depend on the nature of the subject, but on the knowledge displayed of it, on the number of ideas they excite, on the fund of thought and observation contained in them. They are to be studied as works of science as well as of amusement; they satisfy our love of truth; they fill up the void in the mind; they form a series of plates in natural history, and of that most interesting part of natural history, the history of our own species. Make what deductions you please for the vulgarity of the subject, yet in the research, the profundity, the absolute truth and precision of the delineation of character; in the invention of incident, in wit and humour; in the life with which they are 'instinct in every part;' in everlasting variety and originality; they never have, and probably never will be surpassed. They stimulate the faculties as well as soothe them. 'Other pictures we see, Hogarth's we read.'

The public had not long ago an opportunity of viewing most of Hogarth's pictures, in the collection made of them at the British Gallery. The superiority of the original paintings to the common prints, is in a great measure confined to the Marriage a-la-Mode, with which I shall begin my remarks.

Boccaccio, the most refined and sentimental of all the novel-writers, has been stigmatised as a mere inventor of licentious tales, because

readers in general have only seized on those things in his works which were suited to their own taste, and have thus reflected their own grossness back upon the writer. So it has happened, that the majority of critics having been most struck with the strong and decided expression in Hogarth, the extreme delicacy and subtle gradations of character in his pictures have almost entirely escaped them. In the first picture of the *Marriage a-la-Mode*, the three figures of the young Nobleman, his intended Bride, and her Inamorato, the Lawyer, shew how much Hogarth excelled in the power of giving soft and effeminate expression. They have, however, been less noticed than the other figures, which tell a plainer story, and convey a more palpable moral. Nothing can be more finely managed than the differences of character in these delicate personages. The beau sits smiling at the looking-glass with a reflected simper of self-admiration, and a languishing inclination of the head, while the rest of his body is perked up on his high heels with a certain air of tip-toe elevation. He is the Narcissus of the reign of George II.; whose powdered peruke, ruffles, gold-lace, and patches, divide his self-love unequally with his own person—the true *Sir Plume* of his day;

> 'Of amber-lidded snuff box justly vain,
> And the nice conduct of a clouded cane.'

Again we find the same felicity in the figure and attitude of the Bride, courted by the Lawyer. There is the utmost flexibility, and yielding softness in her whole person, a listless languor and tremulous suspense in the expression of her face. It is the precise look and air which Pope has given to his favourite Belinda, just at the moment of the *Rape of the Lock*. The heightened glow, the forward intelligence, and loosened soul of love in the same face, in the Assignation scene before the masquerade, form a fine and instructive contrast to the delicacy, timidity, and coy reluctance expressed in the first. The Lawyer in both pictures is much the same, perhaps too much so; though even this unmoved, unaltered appearance may be designed as characteristic. In both cases he has 'a person, and a smooth dispose, framed to make women false.' He is full of that easy good-humour, and easy good opinion of himself, with which the sex are often delighted. There is not a sharp angle in his face to obstruct his success, or give a hint of doubt or difficulty. His whole aspect is round and rosy, lively and unmeaning, happy without the least expense of thought, careless and inviting; and conveys a perfect idea of the uninterrupted glide and pleasing murmur of the soft periods that flow from his tongue.

The expression of the Bride in the Morning Scene is the most

highly seasoned, and at the same time the most vulgar in the series. The figure, face, and attitude of the husband, are inimitable. Hogarth has with great skill contrasted the pale countenance of the husband with the yellow whitish colour of the marble chimney-piece behind him, in such a manner as to preserve the fleshy tone of the former. The airy splendour of the view of the inner-room in this picture is probably not exceeded by any of the productions of the Flemish school.

The young girl in the third picture, who is represented as the victim of fashionable profligacy, is unquestionably one of the artist's *chef-d'œuvres*. The exquisite delicacy of the painting is only surpassed by the felicity and subtlety of the conception. Nothing can be more striking than the contrast between the extreme softness of her person, and the hardened indifference of her character. The vacant stillness, the docility to vice, the premature suppression of youthful sensibility, the doll-like mechanism of the whole figure, which seems to have no other feeling but a sickly sense of pain—shew the deepest insight into human nature, and into the effects of those refinements in depravity, by which it has been good-naturedly asserted, that 'vice loses half its evil in losing all its grossness.' The story of this picture is in some parts very obscure and enigmatical. It is certain that the nobleman is not looking strait forward to the quack, whom he seems to have been threatening with his cane; but that his eyes are turned up with an ironical leer of triumph to the procuress. The commanding attitude and size of this woman, the swelling circumference of her dress, spread out like a turkey-cock's feathers, the fierce, ungovernable, inveterate malignity of her countenance, which hardly needs the comment of the clasp-knife to explain her purpose, all are admirable in themselves, and still more so, as they are opposed to the mute insensibility, the elegant negligence of dress, and the childish figure of the girl who is supposed to be her *protegée*.—As for the Quack, there can be no doubt entertained about him. His face seems as if it were composed of salve, and his features exhibit all the chaos or confusion of the most gross, ignorant, and impudent empiricism. The gradations of ridiculous affectation in the Music scene are finely imagined and preserved. The preposterous, overstrained admiration of the lady of quality; the sentimental, insipid, patient delight of the man, with his hair in papers, and sipping his tea: the pert, smirking, conceited, half-distorted approbation of the figure next to him; the transition to the total insensibility of the round face in profile, and then to the wonder of the negro-boy at the rapture of his mistress, form a perfect whole. The sanguine complexion and flame-coloured hair of the female virtuoso throw

an additional light on the character. This is lost in the print. The continuing the red colour of the hair into the back of the chair, has been pointed out as one of those instances of what may be termed alliteration in colouring, of which these pictures are every where full. The gross bloated appearance of the Italian singer is well relieved by the hard features of the instrumental performer behind him, which might be carved of wood. The negro-boy holding the chocolate, both in expression, colour, and execution, is a masterpiece. The gay, lively derision of the other negro-boy playing with the Acteon, is an ingenious contrast to the profound amazement of the first. Some account has already been given of the two lovers in this picture. It is curious to observe the infinite activity of mind which the artist displays on every occasion. An instance occurs in the present picture. He has so contrived the papers in the hair of the bride, as to make them look almost like a wreath of half-blown flowers; while those which he has placed on the head of the musical amateur, very much resemble a *cheveux-de-fris* of horns, which adorn and fortify the lack lustre expression, and mild resignation of the face beneath.

The Night Scene is inferior to the rest of the series. The attitude of the husband, who is just killed, is one in which it would be impossible for him to stand or even to fall. It resembles the loose pasteboard figures they make for children. The characters in the last picture, in which the wife dies, are all masterly. I would particularly refer to the captious, petulant, self-sufficiency of the Apothecary, whose face and figure are constructed on exact physiognomical principles; and to the fine example of passive obedience and non-resistance in the servant, whom he is taking to task, and whose coat, of green and yellow livery, is as long and as melancholy as his face. The disconsolate look and haggard eyes, the open mouth, the comb sticking in the hair, the broken gapped teeth, which, as it were, hitch in an answer, every thing about him denotes the utmost perplexity and dismay. The harmony and gradations of colour in this picture are uniformly preserved with the greatest nicety, and are well worthy the attention of the artist.—I have so far attempted to point out the fund of observation, physical and moral, contained in one set of these pictures, the *Marriage-a-la-Mode*. The rest would furnish as many topics to descant upon, were the patience of the reader as inexhaustible as the painter's invention. But as this is not the case, I shall content myself with barely referring to some of those figures in the other pictures, which appear to me the most striking, and which we see not only while we are looking at them, but which we have before us at all other times. For instance,

who, having seen, can easily forget that exquisite frost-piece of religion and morality, the antiquated Prude in the Morning Scene; or that striking commentary on the *good old times*, the little wretched appendage of a Foot-boy, who crawls, half famished and half frozen, behind her? The French man and woman in the Noon, are the perfection of flighty affectation and studied grimace; the amiable *fraternization* of the two old women saluting each other, is not enough to be admired; and in the little Master, in the same national group, we see the early promise and personification of that eternal principle of wondrous self-complacency, proof against all circumstances, and which makes the French the only people who are vain even of being cuckolded and being conquered! Or shall we prefer to this the outraged distress and unmitigated terrors of the Boy who has dropped his dish of meat, and who seems red all over with shame and vexation, and bursting with the noise he makes? Or what can be better than the good housewifery of the Girl underneath, who is devouring the lucky fragments; or than the plump, ripe, florid, luscious look of the Servant-wench near her, embraced by a greasy rascal of an Othello, with her pye-dish tottering like her virtue, and with the most precious part of its contents running over? Just—no, not quite—as good is the joke of the Woman overhead, who, having quarrelled with her Husband, is throwing their Sunday's dinner out of the window, to complete this chapter of accidents of baked-dishes. The Husband in the Evening Scene is certainly as meek as any recorded in history; but I cannot say that I admire this picture, or the Night Scene after it. But then, in the Taste in High-Life, there is that inimitable pair, differing only in sex, congratulating and delighting one another by 'all the mutually reflected charities' of folly and affectation, with the young Lady, coloured like a rose, dandling her little, black, pug-faced, white-teethed, chuckling favourite; and with the portrait of Monsieur Des Noyers in the back-ground, dancing in a grand ballet, surrounded by butterflies. And again, in the Election Dinner, is the immortal Cobbler, surrounded by his Peers, who,

> '—— frequent and full,
> In *loud* recess and *brawling* conclave sit'——

the Jew in the second picture, a very Jew in grain; innumerable fine sketches of heads in the Polling for Votes, of which the Nobleman overlooking the Caricaturist is the second best, and the Blind-man going up to vote, the best; and then the irresistible, tumultuous display of broad humour in the Chairing the Member, which is, perhaps, of all Hogarth's pictures, the most full of laughable incidents

and situations; the yellow, rusty-faced Thresher, with his swinging flail breaking the head of one of the chairmen; and his redoubted antagonist, the Sailor, with his oak-stick, and stumping wooden-leg, a supplemental cudgel; the persevering ecstasy of the hobbling Blind Fiddler, who, in the fray, appears to have been trod upon by the artificial excrescence of the honest tar; Monsieur, the monkey, with piteous aspect, speculating the impending disaster of the triumphant Candidate, and his brother Bruin, appropriating the paunch; the precipitous flight of the Pigs, souse over head into the water; the fine Lady fainting, with vermilion lips; and the two Chimney Sweepers, satirical young rogues!—I had almost forgot the Politician, who is burning a hole through his hat with a candle in reading a newspaper; and the Chickens, in the *March to Finchley*, wandering in search of their lost dam, who is found in the pocket of the Serjeant. Of the pictures in the *Rake's Progress*, exhibited in this collection, I shall not here say any thing, because I think them on the whole inferior to the prints, and because they have already been criticised by a writer, to whom I could add nothing, in a paper which ought to be read by every lover of Hogarth and of English genius—I mean, Mr. Lamb's Essay on the works of Hogarth. I shall at present proceed to form some estimate of the style of art in which this painter excelled.

What distinguishes his compositions from all others of the same general kind, is, that they are equally remote from caricature, and from mere still life. It of course happens in subjects taken from common life, that the painter can procure real models, and he can get them to sit as long as he pleases. Hence, in general, those attitudes and expressions have been chosen which could be assumed the longest; and in imitating which, the artist by taking pains and time might produce almost as complete *fac-similes* as he could of a flower or a flower-pot, of a damask curtain or a china-vase. The copy was as perfect and as uninteresting in the one case as in the other. On the contrary, subjects of drollery and ridicule affording frequent examples of strange deformity and peculiarity of features, these have been eagerly seized by another class of artists, who, without subjecting themselves to the laborious drudgery of the Dutch school and their imitators, have produced our popular caricatures, by rudely copying or exaggerating the casual irregularities of the human countenance. Hogarth has equally avoided the faults of both these styles: the insipid tameness of the one, and the gross extravagance of the other, so as to give to the productions of his pencil equal solidity and effect. For his faces go to the very verge of caricature, and yet never (I believe in any single instance) go beyond it: they

take the very widest latitude, and yet we always see the links which bind them to nature: they bear all the marks, and carry all the conviction of reality with them, as if we had seen the actual faces for the first time, from the precision, consistency, and good sense with which the whole and every part is made out. They exhibit the most uncommon features, with the most uncommon expressions: but which yet are as familiar and intelligible as possible, because with all the boldness, they have all the truth of nature. Hogarth has left behind him as many of these memorable faces, in their memorable moments, as, perhaps, most of us remember in the course of our lives, and has thus doubled the quantity of our experience.

It will assist us in forming a more determinate idea of the peculiar genius of Hogarth, to compare him with a deservedly admired artist in our own times. The highest authority on art in this country, I understand, has pronounced that Mr. Wilkie united the excellences of Hogarth to those of Teniers. I demur to this decision in both its branches; but in demurring to authority, it is necessary to give our reasons. I conceive that this ingenious and attentive observer of nature has certain essential, real, and indisputable excellences of his own; and I think it, therefore, the less important to clothe him with any vicarious merits which do not belong to him. Mr. Wilkie's pictures, generally speaking, derive almost their whole value from their *reality*, or the truth of the representation. They are works of pure imitative art; and the test of this style of composition is to represent nature faithfully and happily in its simplest combinations. It may be said of an artist like Mr. Wilkie, that *nothing human is indifferent to him*. His mind takes an interest in, and it gives an interest to, the most familiar scenes and transactions of life. He professedly gives character, thought, and passion, in their lowest degrees, and in their every-day forms. He selects the commonest events and appearances of nature for his subjects; and trusts to their very commonness for the interest and amusement he is to excite. Mr. Wilkie is a serious, prosaic, literal narrator of facts; and his pictures may be considered as diaries, or minutes of what is passing constantly about us. Hogarth, on the contrary, is essentially a comic painter; his pictures are not indifferent, unimpassioned descriptions of human nature, but rich, exuberant satires upon it. He is carried away by a passion for the *ridiculous*. His object is 'to shew vice her own feature, scorn her own image.' He is so far from contenting himself with still-life, that he is always on the verge of caricature, though without ever falling into it. He does not represent folly or vice in its incipient, or dormant, or *grub* state; but full grown, with wings, pampered into all sorts of affectation, airy,

ostentatious, and extravagant. Folly is there seen at the height—the moon is at the full; it is 'the very error of the time.' There is a perpetual collision of eccentricities—a tilt and tournament of absurdities; the prejudices and caprices of mankind are let loose, and set together by the ears, as in a bear-garden. Hogarth paints nothing but comedy, or tragi-comedy. Wilkie paints neither one nor the other. Hogarth never looks at any object but to find out a moral or a ludicrous effect. Wilkie never looks at any object but to see that it is there. Hogarth's pictures are a perfect jest-book, from one end to the other. I do not remember a single joke in Wilkie's, except one very bad one of the boy in the Blind Fiddler, scraping the gridiron, or fire-shovel, I forget which it is.[1] In looking at Hogarth, you are ready to burst your sides with laughing at the unaccountable jumble of odd things which are brought together; you look at Wilkie's pictures with a mingled feeling of curiosity, and admiration at the accuracy of the representation. For instance, there is a most admirable head of a man coughing in the Rent-day; the action, the keeping, the choaked sensation, are inimitable: but there is nothing to laugh at in a man coughing. What strikes the mind is the difficulty of a man's being painted coughing, which here certainly is a masterpiece of art. But turn to the blackguard Cobbler in the Election Dinner, who has been smutting his neighbour's face over, and who is lolling out his tongue at the joke, with a most surprising obliquity of vision; and immediately 'your lungs begin to crow like chanticleer.' Again, there is the little boy crying in the Cut Finger, who only gives you the idea of a cross, disagreeable, obstinate child in pain: whereas the same face in Hogarth's Noon, from the ridiculous perplexity it is in, and its extravagant, noisy, unfelt distress, at the accident of having let fall the pye-dish, is quite irresistible. Mr. Wilkie, in his picture of the Ale-house door, I believe, painted Mr. Liston as one of the figures, without any great effect. Hogarth would have given any price for such a subject, and would have made it worth any money. I have never seen any thing, in the expression of comic humour, equal to Hogarth's pictures, but Liston's face!

Mr. Wilkie paints interiors: but still you generally connect them with the country. Hogarth, even when he paints people in the open air, represents them either as coming from London, as in the polling for votes at Brentford, or as returning to it, as the dyer and his wife at Bagnigge Wells. In this last picture, he has contrived to convert a common rural image into a type and emblem of city honours. In

[1] The Waiter drawing the cork, in the Rent-day, is another exception, and quite Hogarthian.

fact, I know no one who had a less pastoral imagination than Hogarth. He delights in the thick of St. Giles's or St. James's. His pictures breathe a certain close, greasy, tavern air. The fare he serves up to us consists of high-seasoned dishes, ragouts and olla podridas, like the supper in Gil Blas, which it requires a strong stomach to digest. Mr. Wilkie presents us with a sort of lenten fare, very good and wholesome, but rather insipid than overpowering! Mr. Wilkie's pictures are, in general, much better painted than Hogarth's; but the Marriage-a-la-Mode is superior both in colour and execution to any of Wilkie's. I may add here, without any disparagement, that, as an artist, Mr. Wilkie is hardly to be mentioned with Teniers. Neither in truth and brilliant clearness of colouring, nor in facility of execution, is there any comparison. Teniers was a perfect master in all these respects; and our own countryman is positively defective, notwithstanding the very laudable care with which he finishes every part of his pictures. There is an evident smear and dragging of the paint, which is also of a bad purple, or puttyish tone, and which never appears in the pictures of the Flemish artist, any more than in a looking-glass. Teniers, probably from his facility of execution, succeeded in giving a more local and momentary expression to his figures. They seem each going on with his particular amusement or occupation; Wilkie's have, in general, more a look of sitting for their pictures. Their compositions are very different also: and in this respect, I believe, Mr. Wilkie has the advantage. Teniers's boors are usually amusing themselves at skittles, or dancing, or drinking, or smoking, or doing what they like, in a careless, desultory way; and so the composition is loose and irregular. Wilkie's figures are all drawn up in a regular order, and engaged in one principal action, with occasional episodes. The story of the Blind Fiddler is the most interesting, and the best told. The two children standing before the musician are delightful. The Card-players is the best coloured of his pictures, if I am not mistaken. The Village Politicians, though excellent as to character and composition, is inferior as a picture to those which Mr. Wilkie has since painted. His latest pictures, however, do not appear to me to be his best. There is something of manner and affectation in the grouping of the figures, and a pink and rosy colour spread over them, which is out of place. The hues of Rubens and Sir Joshua do not agree with Mr. Wilkie's subjects. One of his last pictures, that of Duncan Gray, is equally remarkable for sweetness and simplicity in colour, composition, and expression. I must here conclude this very general account; for to point out the particular beauties of every one of his pictures in detail, would require an Essay by itself.

I have promised to say something in this Lecture on the difference between the grand and familiar style of painting; and I shall throw out what imperfect hints I have been able to collect on this subject, so often attempted, and never yet succeeded in, taking the examples and illustrations from Hogarth, that is, from what he possessed or wanted in each kind.

And first, the difference is not that between imitation and invention: for there is as much of this last quality in Hogarth, as in any painter or poet whatever. As, for example, to take two of his pictures only, I mean the Enraged Musician and the Gin Lane;—in one of which every conceivable variety of disagreeable and discordant sound—the razor-grinder turning his wheel; the boy with his drum, and the girl with her rattle momentarily suspended; the pursuivant blowing his horn; the shrill milkwoman; the inexorable ballad-singer, with her squalling infant; the pewterer's shop close by; the fishwomen; the chimey-sweepers at the top of a chimney, and the two cats in melodious concert on the ridge of the tiles; with the bells ringing in the distance, as we see by the flags flying:—and in the other, the complicated forms and signs of death and ruinous decay—the woman on the stairs of the bridge asleep, letting her child fall over; her ghastly companion opposite, next to death's door, with hollow, famished cheeks and staring ribs; the dog fighting with the man for the bare shin-bone; the man hanging himself in a garret; the female corpse put into a coffin by the parish beadle; the men marching after a funeral, seen through a broken wall in the back ground; and the very houses reeling as if drunk and tumbling about the ears of the infatuated victims below, the pawnbroker's being the only one that stands firm and unimpaired—enforce the moral meant to be conveyed by each of these pieces with a richness and research of combination and artful contrast not easily paralleled in any production of the pencil or the pen. The clock pointing to four in the morning, in Modern Midnight Conversation, just as the immoveable Parson Ford is filling out another glass from a brimming punch-bowl, while most of his companions, with the exception of the sly Lawyer, are falling around him 'like leaves in October;' and again, the extraordinary mistake of the man leaning against the post, in the Lord Mayor's Procession—shew a mind capable of seizing the most rare and transient coincidences of things, of imagining what either never happened at all, or of instantly fixing on and applying to its purpose what never happened but once. So far, the invention shewn in the great style of painting is poor in the comparison. Indeed, grandeur is supposed (whether rightly or not, I shall not here inquire) to imply a

simplicity inconsistent with this inexhaustible variety of incident and circumstantial detail.

Secondly, the difference between the ideal and familiar style is not to be explained by the difference between the genteel and vulgar; for it is evident that Hogarth was almost as much at home in the genteel comedy, as in the broad farce of his pictures. He excelled not only in exhibiting the coarse humours and disgusting incidents of low life, but in exhibiting the vices, follies, and frivolity of the fashionable manners of his time: his fine ladies hardly yield the palm to his waiting-maids, and his lords and his footmen are on a respectable footing of equality. There is no want, for example, in the Marriage-a-la-Mode, or in Taste in High Life, of affectation verging into idiotism, or of languid sensibility, that might—

'Die of a rose in aromatic pain.'

In short, Hogarth was a painter, not of low but of actual life; and the ridiculous and prominent features of high or low life, of the great vulgar or the small, lay equally open to him. The Country Girl, in the first plate of the Harlot's Progress, coming out of the waggon, is not more simple and ungainly, than the same figure, in the second, is thoroughly initiated into the mysteries of her art, and suddenly accomplished in all the airs and graces of affectation, ease, and impudence. The affected languor and imbecility of the same girl afterwards, when put to beat hemp in Bridewell, is exactly in keeping with the character she has been taught to assume. Sir Joshua could do nothing like it in his line of portrait, which differed chiefly in the back ground. The fine gentleman at his levee, in the Rake's Progress, is also a complete model of a person of rank and fortune, surrounded by needy and worthless adventurers, fiddlers, poetasters and virtuosi, as was the custom in those days. Lord Chesterfield himself would not have been disgraced by sitting for it. I might multiply examples to shew that Hogarth was not characteristically deficient in that kind of elegance which arises from an habitual attention to external appearance and deportment. I will only add as instances, among his women, the two *elégantes* in the Bedlam scene, which are dressed (allowing for the difference of not quite a century) in the manner of Ackerman's dresses for May; and among the men, the Lawyer in Modern Midnight Conversation, whose gracious significant leer and sleek lubricated countenance exhibit all the happy finesse of his profession, when a silk gown has been added, or is likely to be added to it; and several figures in the Cockpit, who are evidently, at the first glance, gentlemen of the old school, and where the

mixture of the blacklegs with the higher character is a still further test of the discriminating skill of the painter.

Again, Hogarth had not only a perception of fashion, but a sense of natural beauty. There are as many pleasing faces in his pictures as in Sir Joshua. Witness the girl picking the Rake's pocket in the Bagnio scene, whom we might suppose to be 'the Charming Betsy Careless;' the Poet's wife, handsomer than falls to the lot of most poets, who are generally more intent upon the idea in their own minds than on the image before them, and are glad to take up with Dulcineas of their own creating; the theatrical heroine in the Southwark Fair, who would be an accession to either of our play-houses; the girl asleep, ogled by the clerk in church time, and the sweetheart of the Good Apprentice in the reading desk in the second of that series, almost an ideal face and expression; the girl in her cap selected for a partner by the footman in the print of Morning, very handsome; and many others equally so, scattered like 'stray-gifts of love and beauty' through these pictures. Hogarth was not then exclusively the painter of deformity. He painted beauty or ugliness indifferently, as they came in his way; and was not by nature confined to those faces which are painful and disgusting, as many would have us believe.

Again, neither are we to look for the solution of the difficulty in the difference between the comic and the tragic, between loose laughter and deep passion. For Mr. Lamb has shewn unanswerably that Hogarth is quite at home in scenes of the deepest distress, in the heart-rending calamities of common life, in the expression of ungovernable rage, silent despair, or moody madness, enhanced by the tenderest sympathy, or aggravated by the frightful contrast of the most impenetrable and obdurate insensibility, as we see strikingly exemplified in the latter prints of the Rake's Progress. To the unbeliever in Hogarth's power over the passions and the feelings of the heart, the characters there speak like 'the hand-writing on the wall.' If Mr. Lamb has gone too far in paralleling some of these appalling representations with Shakespear, he was excusable in being led to set off what may be considered as a staggering paradox against a rooted prejudice. At any rate, the inferiority of Hogarth (be it what it may) did not arise from a want of passion and intense feeling; and in this respect he had the advantage over Fielding, for instance, and others of our comic writers, who excelled only in the light and ludicrous. There is in general a distinction, almost an impassable one, between the power of embodying the serious and the ludicrous; but these contradictory faculties were reconciled in Hogarth, as they were in Shakspeare, in Chaucer; and as it is said that they were in another extraordinary and later instance, Garrick's acting.

None of these then will do: neither will the most masterly and entire keeping of character lead us to an explanation of the grand and ideal style; for Hogarth possessed the most complete and absolute mastery over the truth and identity of expression and features in his subjects. Every stroke of his pencil tells according to a preconception in his mind. If the eye squints, the mouth is distorted; every feature acts, and is acted upon by the rest of the face; even the dress and attitude are such as could be proper to no other figure: the whole is under the influence of one impulse, that of truth and nature. Look at the heads in the Cockpit, already mentioned, one of the most masterly of his productions in this way, where the workings of the mind are seen in every muscle of the face; and the same expression, more intense or relaxed, of hope or of fear, is stamped on each of the characters, so that you could no more transpose any part of one countenance to another, than you could change a profile to a front face. Hogarth was, in one sense, strictly an historical painter: that is, he represented the manners and humours of mankind in action, and their characters by varied expression. Every thing in his pictures has life and motion in it. Not only does the business of the scene never stand still, but every feature is put into full play; the exact feeling of the moment is brought out, and carried to its utmost height, and then instantly seized and stamped on the canvass for ever. The expression is always taken *en passant*, in a state of progress or change, and, as it were, at the salient point. Besides the excellence of each individual face, the reflection of the expression from face to face, the contrast and struggle of particular motives and feelings in the different actors in the scene, as of anger, contempt, laughter, compassion, are conveyed in the happiest and most lively manner. His figures are not like the back-ground on which they are painted: even the pictures on the wall have a peculiar look of their own. All this is effected by a few decisive and rapid touches of the pencil, careless in appearance, but infallible in their results; so that one great criterion of the grand style insisted on by Sir Joshua Reynolds, that of leaving out the details, and attending to general character and outline, belonged to Hogarth. He did not indeed arrive at middle forms or neutral expression, which Sir Joshua makes another test of the ideal; for Hogarth was not insipid. That was the last fault with which he could be charged. But he had breadth and boldness of manner, as well as any of them; so that neither does that constitute the *ideal.*

What then does? We have reduced this to something like the last remaining quantity in an equation, where all the others have been ascertained. Hogarth had all the other parts of an original and

accomplished genius except this, but this he had not. He had an intense feeling and command over the impressions of sense, of habit, of character, and passion, the serious and the comic, in a word, of nature, as it fell within his own observation, or came within the sphere of his actual experience; but he had little power beyond that sphere, or sympathy with that which existed only *in idea*. He was 'conformed to this world, not transformed.' If he attempted to paint Pharaoh's daughter, and Paul before Felix, he lost himself. His mind had feet and hands, but not wings to fly with. There is a mighty world of sense, of custom, of every-day action, of accidents and objects coming home to us, and interesting because they do so; the gross, material, stirring, noisy world of common life and selfish passion, of which Hogarth was absolute lord and master: there is another mightier world, that which exists only in conception and in power, the universe of thought and sentiment, that surrounds and is raised above the ordinary world of reality, as the empyrean surrounds this nether globe, into which few are privileged to soar with mighty wings outspread, and in which, as power is given them to embody their aspiring fancies, to 'give to airy nothing a local habitation and a name,' to fill with imaginary shapes of beauty or sublimity, and make the dark abyss pregnant, bringing that which is remote home to us, raising themselves to the lofty, sustaining themselves on the refined and abstracted, making all things like not what we know and feel in ourselves, in this 'ignorant present' time, but like what they must be in themselves, or in our noblest idea of them, and stamping that idea with reality, (but chiefly clothing the best and the highest with grace and grandeur) : this is the ideal in art, in poetry, and in painting. There are things which are cognisable only to sense, which interest only our more immediate instincts and passions; the want of food, the loss of a limb, or a sum of money : there are others that appeal to different and nobler faculties; the wants of the mind, the hunger and thirst after truth and beauty; that is, to faculties commensurate with objects greater and of greater refinement, which to be grand must extend beyond ourselves to others, and our interests in which must be refined in proportion as they do so.[1] The interest in these subjects is in proportion to the power of conceiving them and the power of conceiving them is in proportion to the interest and

[1] When Meg Merrilies says in her dying moments—'Nay, nay, lay my head to the East,' what was the East to her? Not a reality but an idea of distant time and the land of her forefathers; the last, the strongest, and the best that occurred to her in this world. Her gipsy slang and dress were quaint and grotesque; her attachment to the Kaim of Derncleugh and the wood of Warrock was romantic; her worship of the East was *ideal*.

affection for them, to the innate bias of the mind to elevate itself above every thing low, and purify itself from every thing gross. Hogarth only transcribes or transposes what was tangible and visible, not the abstracted and intelligible. You see in his pictures only the faces which you yourself have seen, or others like them; none of his characters are thinking of any person or thing out of the picture: you are only interested in the objects of their contention or pursuit, because they themselves are interested in them. There is nothing remote in thought, or comprehensive in feeling. The whole is intensely personal and local: but the interest of the ideal and poetical style of art, relates to more permanent and universal objects; and the characters and forms must be such as to correspond with and sustain that interest, and give external grace and dignity to it. Such were the subjects which Raphael chose; faces imbued with unalterable sentiment, and figures, that stand in the eternal silence of thought. He places before you objects of everlasting interest, events of greatest magnitude, and persons in them fit for the scene and action—warriors and kings, princes and nobles, and, greater yet, poets and philosophers; and mightier than these, patriarchs and apostles, prophets and founders of religion, saints and martyrs, angels and the Son of God. We know their importance and their high calling, and we feel that they do not belie it. We see them as they were painted, with the eye of faith. The light which they have kindled in the world, is reflected back upon their faces: the awe and homage which has been paid to them, is seated upon their brow, and encircles them like a glory. All those who come before them, are conscious of a superior presence. For example, the beggars, in the Gate Beautiful, are impressed with this ideal borrowed character. Would not the cripple and the halt feel a difference of sensation, and express it outwardly in such circumstances? And was the painter wrong to transfer this sense of preternatural power and the confidence of a saving faith to his canvass? Hogarth's Pool of Bethesda, on the contrary, is only a collection of common beggars receiving an alms. The waters may be stirred, but the mind is not stirred with them. The fowls, again, in the Miraculous Draught of Fishes, exult and clap their wings, and seem lifted up with some unusual cause of joy. There is not the same expansive, elevated principle in Hogarth. He has amiable and praise-worthy characters, indeed, among his bad ones. The Master of the Industrious and Idle Apprentice is a good citizen and a virtuous man; but his benevolence is mechanical and confined: it extends only to his shop, or, at most, to his ward. His face is not ruffled by passion, nor is it inspired by thought. To give another instance, the face of the faithful Female, fainting in the prison-scene in the Rake's Progress,

is more one of effeminate softness than of distinguished tenderness, or heroic constancy. But in the pictures of the Mother and Child, by Raphael and Leonard da Vinci, we see all the tenderness purified from all the weakness of maternal affection, and exalted by the prospects of religious faith ; so that the piety and devotion of future generations seems to add its weight to the expression of feminine sweetness and parental love, to press upon the heart, and breathe in the countenance. This is the *ideal*, passion blended with thought and pointing to distant objects, not debased by grossness, not thwarted by accident, nor weakened by familiarity, but connected with forms and circumstances that give the utmost possible expansion and refinement to the general sentiment. With all my admiration of Hogarth, I cannot think him equal to Raphael. I do not know whether, if the port-folio were opened, I would not as soon look over the prints of Hogarth as those of Raphael ; but, assuredly, if the question were put to me, I would sooner never have seen the prints of Hogarth than never have seen those of Raphael It is many years ago since I first saw the prints of the Cartoons hanging round the old-fashioned parlour of a little inn in a remote part of the country. I was then young : I had heard of the fame of the Cartoons, but this was the first time I had ever been admitted face to face into the presence of those divine guests. 'How was I then uplifted ! ' Prophets and Apostles stood before me as in a dream, and the Saviour of the Christian world, with his attributes of faith and power ; miracles were working on the walls ; the hand of Raphael was there ; and as his pencil traced the lines, I saw godlike spirits and lofty shapes descend and walk visibly the earth, but as if their thoughts still lifted them above the earth. There I saw the figure of St. Paul, pointing with noble fervour to 'temples not made with hands, eternal in the heavens ; ' and that finer one of Christ in the boat, whose whole figure seems sustained by meekness and love ; and that of the same person surrounded by his disciples, like a flock of sheep listening to the music of some divine shepherd. I knew not how enough to admire them.—Later in life, I saw other works of this great painter (with more like them) collected in the Louvre : where Art, at that time, lifted up her head, and was seated on her throne, and said, 'All eyes shall see me, and all knees shall bow to me ! ' Honour was done to her and all hers. There was her treasure, and there the inventory of all she had. There she had gathered together her pomp, and there was her shrine, and there her votaries came and worshipped as in a temple. The crown she wore was brighter than that of kings. Where the struggles for human liberty had been, there were the triumphs of human genius. For there, in the Louvre, were the precious monu-

ments of art:—There 'stood the statue that enchants the world;' there was Apollo, the Laocoon, the Dying Gladiator, the head of the Antinous, Diana with her Fawn, the Muses and the Graces in a ring, and all the glories of the antique world:—

'There was old Proteus coming from the sea,
And wreathed Triton blew his winding horn.'

There, too, were the two St. Jeromes, Correggio's, and Domenichino's; there was Raphael's Transfiguration; the St. Mark of Tintoret; Paul Veronese's Marriage of Cana; the Deluge of Poussin; and Titian's St. Peter Martyr. It was there that I learned to become an enthusiast of the lasting works of the great painters, and of their names no less magnificent; grateful to the heart as the sound of celestial harmony from other spheres, waking around us (whether heard or not) from youth to age; the stay, the guide, and anchor of our purest thoughts; whom, having once seen, we always remember, and who teach us to see all things through them; without whom life would be to begin again, and the earth barren; of Raphael, who lifted the human form half way to heaven; of Titian, who painted the mind in the face, and unfolded the soul of things to the eye; of Rubens, around whose pencil gorgeous shapes thronged numberless, startling us by the novel accidents of form and colour, putting the spirit of motion into the universe, and weaving a gay fantastic round and Bacchanalian dance with nature; of Rembrandt, too, who 'smoothed the raven down of darkness till it smiled,' and tinged it with a light like streaks of burning ore: of these, and more than these, of whom the world was scarce worthy, and for the loss of whom nothing could console me—not even the works of Hogarth!

LECTURE VIII

ON THE COMIC WRITERS OF THE LAST CENTURY

The question which has been often asked, *Why there are comparatively so few good modern Comedies?* appears in a great measure to answer itself. It is because so many excellent comedies have been written, that there are none written at present. Comedy naturally wears itself out—destroys the very food on which it lives; and by constantly and successfully exposing the follies and weaknesses of mankind to ridicule, in the end leaves itself nothing worth laughing at. It holds the mirror up to nature; and men, seeing their most striking peculiarities and defects pass in gay review before them, learn either

to avoid or conceal them. It is not the criticism which the public taste exercises upon the stage, but the criticism which the stage exercises upon public manners, that is fatal to comedy, by rendering the subject-matter of it tame, correct, and spiritless. We are drilled into a sort of stupid decorum, and forced to wear the same dull uniform of outward appearance; and yet it is asked, why the Comic Muse does not point, as she was wont, at the peculiarities of our gait and gesture, and exhibit the picturesque contrasts of our dress and costume, in all that graceful variety in which she delights. The genuine source of comic writing,

'Where it must live, or have no life at all,'

is undoubtedly to be found in the distinguishing peculiarities of men and manners. Now this distinction can subsist, so as to be strong, pointed, and general, only while the manners of different classes are formed almost immediately by their particular circumstances, and the characters of individuals by their natural temperament and situation, without being everlastingly modified and neutralized by intercourse with the world—by knowledge and education. In a certain stage of society, men may be said to vegetate like trees, and to become rooted to the soil in which they grow. They have no idea of any thing beyond themselves and their immediate sphere of action; they are, as it were, circumscribed, and defined by their particular circumstances; they are what their situation makes them, and nothing more. Each is absorbed in his own profession or pursuit, and each in his turn contracts that habitual peculiarity of manners and opinions which makes him the subject of ridicule to others, and the sport of the Comic Muse. Thus the physician is nothing but a physician, the lawyer is a mere lawyer, the scholar degenerates into a pedant, the country squire is a different species of being from the fine gentleman, the citizen and the courtier inhabit a different world, and even the affectation of certain characters, in aping the follies or vices of their betters, only serves to shew the immeasurable distance which custom or fortune has placed between them. Hence the earlier comic writers, taking advantage of this mixed and solid mass of ignorance, folly, pride, and prejudice, made those deep and lasting incisions into it,—have given those sharp and nice touches, that bold relief to their characters,—have opposed them in every variety of contrast and collision, of conscious self-satisfaction and mutual antipathy, with a power which can only find full scope in the same rich and inexhaustible materials. But in proportion as comic genius succeeds in taking off the mask from ignorance and conceit, as it teaches us

'To see ourselves as others see us,'—

in proportion as we are brought out on the stage together, and our prejudices clash one against the other, our sharp angular points wear off; we are no longer rigid in absurdity, passionate in folly, and we prevent the ridicule directed at our habitual foibles by laughing at them ourselves.

If it be said, that there is the same fund of absurdity and prejudice in the world as ever—that there are the same unaccountable perversities lurking at the bottom of every breast,—I should answer, Be it so: but at least we keep our follies to ourselves as much as possible; we palliate, shuffle, and equivocate with them; they sneak into bye-corners, and do not, like *Chaucer's Canterbury Pilgrims*, march along the high road, and form a procession; they do not entrench themselves strongly behind custom and precedent; they are not embodied in professions and ranks in life; they are not organized into a system; they do not openly resort to a standard, but are a sort of straggling non-descripts, that, like *Wart*, 'present no mark to the foeman.' As to the gross and palpable absurdities of modern manners, they are too shallow and barefaced, and those who affect are too little *serious* in them, to make them worth the detection of the Comic Muse. They proceed from an idle, impudent affectation of folly in general, in the dashing *bravura* style, not from an infatuation with any of its characteristic modes. In short, the proper object of ridicule is *egotism*: and a man cannot be a very great egotist, who every day sees himself represented on the stage. We are deficient in comedy, because we are without characters in real life—as we have no historical pictures, because we have no faces proper for them.

It is, indeed, the evident tendency of all literature to generalise and *dissipate* character, by giving men the same artificial education, and the same common stock of ideas; so that we see all objects from the same point of view, and through the same reflected medium;—we learn to exist, not in ourselves, but in books;—all men become alike mere readers—spectators, not actors in the scene, and lose their proper personal identity. The templar, the wit, the man of pleasure, and the man of fashion, the courtier and the citizen, the knight and the squire, the lover and the miser—*Lovelace*, *Lothario*, *Will Honeycomb*, and *Sir Roger de Coverley*, *Sparkish* and *Lord Foppington*, *Western* and *Tom Jones*, *My Father* and *My Uncle Toby*, *Millamant* and *Sir Sampson Legend*, *Don Quixote* and *Sancho*, *Gil Blas* and *Guzman d'Alfarache*, *Count Fathom* and *Joseph Surface*,—have met and exchanged common-places on the barren plains of the *haute littérature*—toil slowly on to the temple of science, 'seen a long way off upon a level,' and end in one dull compound of politics, criticism, and metaphysics!

We cannot expect to reconcile opposite things. If, for example, any of us were to put ourselves into the stage-coach from Salisbury to London, it is more than probable we should not meet with the same number of odd accidents, or ludicrous distresses on the road, that befel *Parson Adams*; but why, if we get into a common vehicle, and submit to the conveniences of modern travelling, should we complain of the want of adventures? Modern manners may be compared to a modern stage-coach; our limbs may be a little cramped with the confinement, and we may grow drowsy, but we arrive safe, without any very amusing or very sad accident, at our journey's end.

In this theory I have, at least, the authority of Sterne and the Tatler on my side, who attribute the greater variety and richness of comic excellence in our writers, to the greater variety and distinctness of character among ourselves; the roughness of the texture and the sharp angles not being worn out by the artificial refinements of intellect, or the frequent collision of social intercourse.—It has been argued on the other hand, indeed, that this circumstance makes against me; that the suppression of the grosser indications of absurdity ought to stimulate and give scope to the ingenuity and penetration of the comic writer who is to detect them; and that the progress of wit and humour ought to keep pace with critical distinctions and metaphysical niceties. Some theorists, indeed, have been sanguine enough to expect a regular advance from grossness to refinement on the stage and in real life, marked on a graduated scale of human perfectibility, and have been hence led to imagine that the best of our old comedies were no better than the coarse jests of a set of country clowns—a sort of *comedies bourgeoises*, compared with the admirable productions which might, but have not, been written in our times. I must protest against this theory altogether, which would go to degrade genteel comedy from a high court lady into a literary prostitute. I do not know what these persons mean by refinement in this instance. Do they find none in Millamant and her morning dreams, in Sir Roger de Coverley and his widow? Did not Etherege, Wycherley, and Congreve, approach tolerably near

'——the ring
Of mimic statesmen and their merry king?'

Is there no distinction between an Angelica and a Miss Prue, a Valentine, a Tattle, and a Ben? Where, in the annals of modern literature, shall we find any thing more refined, more deliberate, more abstracted in vice, than the nobleman in Amelia? Are not the compliments which Pope paid to his friends equal in taste and elegance to any which have been paid since? Are there no traits in Sterne? Is

not Richardson minute enough? Must we part with Sophia Western and her muff, and Clarissa Harlowe's 'preferable regards' for the loves of the plants and the triangles? Or shall we say that the Berinthias and Alitheas of former times were little rustics, because they did not, like our modern belles, subscribe to circulating libraries, read Beppo, prefer Gertrude of Wyoming to the Lady of the Lake, or the Lady of the Lake to Gertrude of Wyoming, differ in their sentiments on points of taste or systems of mineralogy, and deliver dissertations on the arts with Corinna of Italy? They had something else to do and to talk about. They were employed in reality, as we see them on the stage, in setting off their charms to the greatest advantage, in mortifying their rivals by the most pointed irony, and trifling with their lovers with infinite address. The height of comic elegance and refinement is not to be found in the general diffusion of knowledge and civilization, which tends to level and neutralize, but in the pride of individual distinction, and the contrast between the conflicting pretensions of different ranks in society.

For this reason I conceive that the alterations which have taken place in coversation and dress, in consequence of the change of manners in the same period, have been by no means favourable to comedy. The present prevailing style of conversation is not *personal*, but critical and analytical. It consists almost entirely in the discussion of general topics, in ascertaining the merits of authors and their works: and Congreve would be able to derive no better hints from the conversations of our toilettes or drawing-rooms, for the exquisite raillery or poignant repartee of his dialogues, than from a deliberation of the Royal Society. In manner, the extreme simplicity and graceful uniformity of modern dress, however favourable to the arts, has certainly stript comedy of one of its richest ornaments and most expressive symbols. The sweeping pall and buskin, and nodding plume, were never more serviceable to tragedy, than the enormous hoops and stiff stays worn by the belles of former days, were to the intrigues of comedy. They assisted wonderfully in heightening the mysteries of the passion, and adding to the intricacy of the plot. Wycherley and Vanbrugh could not have spared the dresses of Vandyke. These strange fancy-dresses, perverse disguises, and counterfeit shapes, gave an agreeable scope to the imagination. 'That sevenfold fence' was a sort of foil to the lusciousness of the dialogue, and a barrier against the sly encroachments of *double entendre.* The greedy eye and bold hand of indiscretion were repressed, which gave a greater license to the tongue. The senses were not to be gratified in an instant. Love was entangled in the folds of the swelling handkerchief, and the desires might wander for ever round

the circumference of a quilted petticoat, or find a rich lodging in the flowers of a damask stomacher. There was room for years of patient contrivance, for a thousand thoughts, schemes, conjectures, hopes, fears, and wishes. There seemed no end of obstacles and delays; to overcome so many difficulties was the work of ages. A mistress was an angel, concealed behind whalebone, flounces, and brocade. What an undertaking to penetrate through the disguise! What an impulse must it give to the blood, what a keenness to the invention, what a volubility to the tongue! 'Mr. Smirk, you are a brisk man,' was then the most significant commendation; but now-a-days—a woman can be *but undressed!*—Again, the character of the fine gentleman is at present a little obscured on the stage, nor do we immediately recognise it elsewhere, for want of the formidable *insignia* of a bag-wig and sword. Without these outward credentials, the public must not only be unable to distinguish this character intuitively, but it must be 'almost afraid to know itself.' The present simple disguise of a gentleman is like the *incognito* of kings. The opinion of others affects our opinion of ourselves; and we can hardly expect from a modern man of fashion that air of dignity and superior gracefulness of carriage, which those must have assumed who were conscious that all eyes were upon them, and that their lofty pretensions continually exposed them either to public scorn or challenged public admiration. A lord who should take the wall of the plebeian passengers without a sword by his side, would hardly have his claim of precedence acknowledged; nor could he be supposed to have that obsolete air of self-importance about him, which should alone clear the pavement at his approach. It is curious how an ingenious actor of the present day (Mr. Farren) should play Lord Ogleby so well as he does, having never seen any thing of the sort in reality. A nobleman in full costume, and in broad day, would be a phenomenon like the lord mayor's coach. The attempt at getting up genteel comedy at present is a sort of Galvanic experiment, a revival of the dead.[1]

I have observed in a former Lecture, that the most spirited æra of

[1] I have only to add, by way of explanation on this subject, the following passage from the Characters of Shakspeare's Plays: 'There is a certain stage of society in which people become conscious of their peculiarities and absurdities, affect to disguise what they are, and set up pretensions to what they are not. This gives rise to a corresponding style of comedy, the object of which is to detect the disguises of self-love, and to make reprisals on these preposterous assumptions of vanity, by marking the contrast between the real and the affected character as severely as possible, and denying to those, who would impose on us for what they are not, even the merit which they have. This is the comedy of artificial life, of wit and satire, such as we see it in Congreve, Wycherley, Vanbrugh, &c. To this succeeds a state of society from which the same sort of affectation and pretence are

our comic drama was that which reflected the conversation, tone, and manners of the profligate, but witty age of Charles II. With the graver and more business-like turn which the Revolution probably gave to our minds, comedy stooped from her bolder and more fantastic flights; and the ferocious attack made by the nonjuring divine, Jeremy Collier, on the immorality and profaneness of the plays then chiefly in vogue, nearly frightened those unwarrantable liberties of wit and humour from the stage, which were no longer countenanced at court nor copied in the city. Almost the last of our writers who ventured to hold out in the prohibited track, was a female adventurer, Mrs. Centlivre, who seemed to take advantage of the privilege of her sex, and to set at defiance the cynical denunciations of the angry puritanical reformist. Her plays have a provoking spirit and volatile salt in them, which still preserves them from decay. Congreve is said to have been jealous of their success at the time, and that it was one cause which drove him in disgust from the stage. If so, it was without any good reason: for these plays have great and intrinsic merit in them, which entitled them to their popularity (and it is only spurious and undeserved popularity which should excite a feeling of jealousy in any well-regulated mind): and besides, their merit was of a kind entirely different from his own. The Wonder and the Busy Body are properly comedies of intrigue. Their interest depends chiefly on the intricate involution and artful *denouement* of the plot, which has a strong tincture of mischief in it, and the wit is seasoned by the archness of the humour and sly allusion to the most delicate points. They are plays evidently written by a very clever woman, but still by a woman: for I hold, in spite of any fanciful theories to the contrary, that there is a distinction discernible in the minds of women as well as in their faces. The Wonder is one of the best of our acting plays. The passion of jealousy in Don Felix is managed in such a way as to give as little offence as possible to the audience, for every appearance combines to excite and confirm his worst suspicions, while we, who are in the secret, laugh at his ground-

banished by a greater knowledge of the world, or by their successful exposure on the stage; and which by neutralizing the materials of comic character, both natural and artificial, leaves no comedy at all—but *the sentimental*. Such is our modern comedy. There is a period in the progress of manners anterior to both these, in which the foibles and follies of individuals are of nature's planting, not the growth of art or study; in which they are therefore unconscious of them themselves, or care not who knows them, if they can but have their whim out; and in which, as there is no attempt at imposition, the spectators rather receive pleasure from humouring the inclinations of the persons they laugh at, than wish to give them pain by exposing their absurdity. This may be called the comedy of nature, and it is the comedy which we generally find in Shakspeare.' P. 256.

less uneasiness and apprehensions. The ambiguity of the heroine's situation, which is like a continued practical *equivoque*, gives rise to a quick succession of causeless alarms, subtle excuses, and the most hair-breadth 'scapes. The scene near the end, in which Don Felix, pretending to be drunk, forces his way out of Don Manuel's house, who wants to keep him a prisoner, by producing his marriage-contract in the shape of a pocket-pistol, with the terrors and confusion into which the old gentleman is thrown by this sort of *argumentum ad hominem*, is one of the richest treats the stage affords, and calls forth incessant peals of laughter and applause. Besides the two principal characters (Violante and Don Felix) Lissardo and Flippanta come in very well to carry on the under-plot; and the airs and graces of an amorous waiting-maid and conceited man-servant, each copying after their master and mistress, were never hit off with more natural volubility or affected *nonchalance* than in this enviable couple. Lissardo's playing off the diamond ring before the eyes of his mortified Dulcinea, and aping his master's absent manner while repeating—'Roast me these Violantes,' as well as the jealous quarrel of the two waiting-maids, which threatens to end in some very extraordinary discoveries, are among the most amusing traits in this comedy. Colonel Breton, the lover of Clara, is a spirited and enterprising soldier of fortune; and his servant Gibby's undaunted, incorrigible blundering, with a dash of nationality in it, tells in a very edifying way.—The Busy Body is inferior, in the interest of the story and characters, to the Wonder; but it is full of bustle and gaiety from beginning to end. The plot never stands still; the situations succeed one another like the changes of machinery in a pantomime. The nice dove-tailing of the incidents, and cross-reading in the situations, supplies the place of any great force of wit or sentiment. The time for the entrance of each person on the stage is the moment when they are least wanted, and when their arrival makes either themselves or somebody else look as foolish as possible. The laughableness of this comedy, as well as of the Wonder, depends on a brilliant series of mistimed exits and entrances. Marplot is the whimsical hero of the piece, and a standing memorial of unmeaning vivacity and assiduous impertinence.

The comedies of Steele were the first that were written expressly with a view not to imitate the manners, but to reform the morals of the age. The author seems to be all the time on his good behaviour, as if writing a comedy was no very creditable employment, and as if the ultimate object of his ambition was a dedication to the queen. Nothing can be better meant, or more inefficient. It is almost a misnomer to call them comedies; they are rather homilies in dialogue,

in which a number of very pretty ladies and gentlemen discuss the fashionable topics of gaming, of duelling, of seduction, of scandal, &c. with a sickly sensibility, that shews as little hearty aversion to vice, as sincere attachment to virtue. By not meeting the question fairly on the ground of common experience, by slubbering over the objections, and varnishing over the answers, the whole distinction between virtue and vice (as it appears in evidence in the comic drama) is reduced to verbal professions, and a mechanical, infantine goodness. The sting is, indeed, taken out of what is bad; but what is good, at the same time, loses its manhood and nobility of nature by this enervating process. I am unwilling to believe that the only difference between right and wrong is mere cant, or *make-believe;* and I imagine, that the advantage which the moral drama possesses over mere theoretical precept or general declamation is this, that by being left free to imitate nature as it is, and not being referred to an ideal standard, it is its own voucher for the truth of the inferences it draws, for its warnings, or its examples; that it brings out the higher, as well as lower principles of action, in the most striking and convincing points of view; satisfies us that virtue is not a mere shadow; clothes it with passion, imagination, reality, and, if I may so say, translates morality from the language of theory into that of practice. But Steele, by introducing the artificial mechanism of morals on the stage, and making his characters act, not from individual motives and existing circumstances, the truth of which every one must feel, but from vague topics and general rules, the truth of which is the very thing to be proved in detail, has lost that fine 'vantage ground which the stage lends to virtue; takes away from it its best grace, the grace of sincerity; and, instead of making it a test of truth, has made it an echo of the doctrine of the schools—and 'the one cries *Mum*, while t'other cries *Budget*!' The comic writer, in my judgment, then, ought to open the volume of nature and the world for his living materials, and not take them out of his ethical common-place book; for in this way, neither will throw any additional light upon the other. In all things there is a division of labour; and I am as little for introducing the tone of the pulpit or reading-desk on the stage, as for introducing plays and interludes in church-time, according to the good old popish practice. It was a part, indeed, of Steele's plan, 'by the politeness of his style and the genteelness of his expressions,'[1] to bring about a reconciliation between things which he thought had hitherto been kept too far asunder, to wed the graces to the virtues, and blend pleasure with profit. And in this design he succeeded

[1] See Mandeville's Fable of the Bees.

admirably in his Tatler, and some other works; but in his comedies he has failed. He has confounded, instead of harmonising—has taken away its gravity from wisdom, and its charm from gaiety. It is not that in his plays we find 'some soul of goodness in things evil;' but they have no soul either of good or bad. His Funeral is as trite, as tedious, and full of formal grimace, as a procession of mutes and undertakers. The characters are made either affectedly good and forbearing, with 'all the milk of human kindness;' or purposely bad and disgusting, for the others to exercise their squeamish charities upon them. The Conscious Lovers is the best; but that is far from good, with the exception of the scene between Mr. Thomas and Phillis, who are fellow-servants, and commence lovers from being set to clean the window together. We are here once more in the company of our old friend, Isaac Bickerstaff, Esq. Indiana is as listless, and as insipid, as a drooping figure on an Indian screen; and Mr. Myrtle and Mr. Bevil only just disturb the still life of the scene. I am sorry that in this censure I should have Parson Adams against me; who thought the Conscious Lovers the only play fit for a Christian to see, and as good as a sermon. For myself, I would rather have read, or heard him read, one of his own manuscript sermons: and if the volume which he left behind him in his saddle-bags was to be had in print, for love or money, I would at any time walk ten miles on foot only to get a sight of it.

Addison's Drummer, or the Haunted House, is a pleasant farce enough; but adds nothing to our idea of the author of the Spectator.

Pope's joint after-piece, called 'An Hour after Marriage,' was not a successful attempt. He brought into it 'an alligator stuff'd,' which disconcerted the ladies, and gave just offence to the critics. Pope was too fastidious for a farce-writer; and yet the most fastidious people, when they step out of their regular routine, are apt to become the grossest. The smallest offences against probability or decorum are, to their habitual scrupulousness, as unpardonable as the greatest. This was the rock on which Pope probably split. The affair was, however, hushed up; and he wreaked his discreet vengeance at leisure on the 'odious endeavours,' and more odious success of Colley Cibber in the line in which he had failed.

Gay's 'What-d'ye-call-it,' is not one of his happiest things. His 'Polly' is a complete failure, which, indeed, is the common fate of second parts. If the original Polly, in the Beggar's Opera, had not had more winning ways with her, she would hardly have had so many Countesses for representatives as she has had, from her first appearance up to the present moment.

Fielding was a comic writer, as well as a novelist; but his comedies

are very inferior to his novels: they are particularly deficient both in plot and character. The only excellence which they have is that of the style, which is the only thing in which his novels are deficient. The only dramatic pieces of Fielding that retain possession of the stage are, the Mock Doctor (a tolerable translation from Moliere's *Medecin malgrè lui*), and his Tom Thumb, a very admirable piece of burlesque. The absurdities and bathos of some of our celebrated tragic writers could hardly be credited, but for the notes at the bottom of this preposterous medley of bombast, containing his authorities and the parallel passages. Dryden, Lee, and Shadwell, make no very shining figure there. Mr. Liston makes a better figure in the text. His Lord Grizzle is prodigious. What a name, and what a person! It has been said of this ingenious actor, that 'he is very great in Liston;' but he is even greater in Lord Grizzle. What a wig is that he wears! How flighty, flaunting, and fantastical! Not 'like those hanging locks of young Apollo,' nor like the serpent-hair of the Furies of Æschylus; but as troublous, though not as tragical as the one—as imposing, though less classical than the other. '*Que terribles sont ces cheveux gris*,' might be applied to Lord Grizzle's most valiant and magnanimous curls. This sapient courtier's 'fell of hair does at a dismal treatise rouse and stir as if life were in 't.' His wits seem flying away with the disorder of his flowing locks, and to sit as loosely on our hero's head as the caul of his peruke. What a significant vacancy in his open eyes and mouth! what a listlessness in his limbs! what an abstraction of all thought or purpose! With what an headlong impulse of enthusiasm he throws himself across the stage when he is going to be married, crying, 'Hey for Doctor's Commons,' as if the genius of folly had taken whole-length possession of his person! And then his dancing is equal to the discovery of a sixth sense—which is certainly very different from *common sense*! If this extraordinary personage cuts a great figure in his life, he is no less wonderful in his death and burial. 'From the sublime to the ridiculous there is but one step;' and this character would almost seem to prove, that there is but one step from the ridiculous to the sublime.—Lubin Log, however inimitable in itself, is itself an imitation of something existing elsewhere; but the Lord Grizzle of this truly original actor, is a pure invention of his own. His Caper, in the Widow's Choice, can alone dispute the palm with it in incoherence and volatility; for that, too, 'is high fantastical,' almost as full of emptiness, in as grand a gusto of insipidity, as profoundly absurd, as elaborately nonsensical! Why does not Mr. Liston play in some of Moliere's farces? I heartily wish that the author of Love, Law, and Physic, would launch him on the London

boards in Monsieur Jourdain, or Monsieur Pourceaugnac. The genius of Liston and Moliere together—

'——Must bid a gay defiance to mischance.'

Mr. Liston is an actor hardly belonging to the present age. Had he lived, unfortunately for us, in the time of Colley Cibber, we should have seen what a splendid niche he would have given him in his Apology.

Cibber is the hero of the Dunciad; but it cannot be said of him, that he was 'by merit raised to that bad eminence.' He was pert, not dull; a coxcomb, not a blockhead; vain, but not malicious. Pope's unqualified abuse of him was mere spleen; and the most obvious provocation to it seems to have been an excess of flippant vivacity in the constitution of Cibber. That Cibber's Birth-day Odes were dull, is true; but this was not peculiar to him. It is an objection which may be made equally to Shadwell's, to Whitehead's, to Warton's, to Pye's, and to all others, except those which of late years have *not* been written! In his Apology for his own Life, Cibber is a most amusing biographer: happy in his own good opinion, the best of all others; teeming with animal spirits, and uniting the self-sufficiency of youth with the garrulity of age. His account of his waiting as a page behind the chair of the old Duchess of Marlborough, at the time of the Revolution, who was then in the bloom of youth and beauty, which seems to have called up in him the secret homage of 'distant, enthusiastic, respectful love,' fifty years after, and the compliment he pays to her (then in her old age), 'a great grandmother without grey hairs,' is as delightful as any thing in fiction or romance; and is the evident origin of Mr. Burke's celebrated apostrophe to the Queen of France. Nor is the political confession of faith which he makes on this occasion, without a suitable mixture of vanity and sincerity: the vanity we may ascribe to the player, the sincerity to the politician. The self-complacency with which he talks of his own success both as a player and a writer, is not greater than the candour and cordiality with which he does heaped justice to the merits of his theatrical contemporaries and predecessors. He brings down the history of the stage, either by the help of observation or tradition, from the time of Shakspeare to his own; and quite dazzles the reader with a constellation of male and female, of tragic and comic, of past and present excellence. He gives portraits at full length of Kynaston, of Betterton, of Booth, of Estcourt, of Penkethman and Dogget, of Mohun and Wilks, of Nokes and Sandford, of Mrs. Montford, of Mrs. Oldfield, of Mrs. Barry and Mrs. Bracegirdle, and of others of equal note; with delectable criticisms on

their several performances, and anecdotes of their private lives, with scarcely a single particle of jealousy or ill-nature, or any other motive than to expatiate in the delight of talking of the ornaments of his art, and a wish to share his pleasure with the reader. I wish I could quote some of these theatrical sketches; but the time presses. The latter part of his work is less entertaining when he becomes Manager, and gives us an exact statement of his squabbles with the Lord Chamberlain, and the expense of his ground-rent, his repairs, his scenery, and his dresses.—In his plays, his personal character perhaps predominates too much over the inventiveness of his Muse; but so far from being dull, he is every where light, fluttering, and airy. His pleasure in himself made him desirous to please; but his fault was, that he was too soon satisfied with what he did, that his indolence or want of thought led him to indulge in the vein that flowed from him with most ease, and that his vanity did not allow him to distinguish between what he did best and worst. His Careless Husband is a very elegant piece of agreeable, thoughtless writing; and the incident of Lady Easy throwing her handkerchief over her husband, whom she finds asleep in a chair by the side of her waiting-woman, was an admirable contrivance, taken, as he informs us, from real life. His Double Gallant, which has been lately revived, though it cannot rank in the first, may take its place in the second or third class of comedies. It abounds in character, bustle, and stage-effect. It belongs to what may be called the composite style; and very happily mixes up the comedy of intrigue, such as we see it in Mrs. Centlivre's Spanish plots, with a tolerable share of the wit and spirit of Congreve and Vanbrugh. As there is a good deal of wit, there is a spice of wickedness in this play, which was a privilege of the good old style of comedy, not altogether abandoned in Cibber's time. The luscious vein of the dialogue is stopped short in many of the scenes of the revived play, though not before we perceive its object—

'—— In hidden mazes running,
With wanton haste and giddy cunning.'

These imperfect hints of double meanings, however, pass off without any marks of reprobation; for unless they are insisted on, or made pretty broad, the audience, from being accustomed to the cautious purity of the modern drama, are not very expert in decyphering the equivocal allusion, for which they are not on the look-out. To what is this increased nicety owing? Was it that vice, from being formerly less common (though more fashionable) was less catching than at present? The first inference is by no means in our favour: for though I think that the grossness of manners prevailing in our fashion-

able comedies was a direct transcript of the manners of the court at the time, or in the period immediately preceding, yet the same grossness of expression and allusion existed long before, as in the plays of Shakspeare and Ben Jonson, when there was not this grossness of manners, and it has of late years been gradually refining away. There is a certain grossness or freedom of expression, which may arise as often from unsuspecting simplicity as from avowed profligacy. Whatever may be our progress either in virtue or vice since the age of Charles II. certain it is, that our manners are not mended since the time of Elizabeth and Charles I. Is it, then, that vice was formerly a thing more to be wondered at than imitated; that behind the rigid barriers of religion and morality it might be exposed freely, without the danger of any serious practical consequences—whereas now that the safeguards of wholesome authority and prejudice are removed, we seem afraid to trust our eyes or ears with a single situation or expression of a loose tendency, as if the mere mention of licentiousness implied a conscious approbation of it, and the extreme delicacy of our moral sense would be debauched by the bare suggestion of the possibility of vice? But I shall not take upon me to answer this question. The characters in the Double Gallant are well kept up: At-All and Lady Dainty are the two most prominent characters in this comedy, and those into which Cibber has put most of his own nature and genius. They are the essence of active impertinence and fashionable frivolity. Cibber, in short, though his name has been handed down to us as a bye-word of impudent pretension and impenetrable dulness by the classical pen of his accomplished rival, who, unfortunately, did not admit of any merit beyond the narrow circle of wit and friendship in which he himself moved, was a gentleman and a scholar of the old school; a man of wit and pleasantry in conversation, a diverting mimic, an excellent actor, an admirable dramatic critic, and one of the best comic writers of his age. His works, instead of being a *caput mortuum* of literature, had a great deal of the spirit, with a little too much of the froth. His Nonjuror was taken from Moliere's Tartuffe, and has been altered to the Hypocrite. Love's Last Shift appears to have been his own favourite; and he received the compliments of Sir John Vanbrugh and old Mr. Southern upon it:—the latter said to him, 'Young man, your play is a good one; and it will succeed, if you do not spoil it by your acting.' His plays did not always take equally. It is ludicrous to hear him complaining of the ill success of one of them, Love in a Riddle, a pastoral comedy, 'of a nice morality,' and well spoken sentiments, which he wrote in opposition to the Beggar's Opera, at the time when its worthless and vulgar rival was carrying every thing trium-

phantly before it. Cibber brings this, with much pathetic *naïveté*, as an instance of the lamentable want of taste in the town!

The Suspicious Husband by Hoadley, the Jealous Wife by Colman, and the Clandestine Marriage by Colman and Garrick, are excellent plays of the middle style of comedy; which are formed rather by judgment and selection, than by any original vein of genius; and have all the parts of a good comedy in degree, without having any one prominent, or to excess. The character of Ranger, in the Suspicious Husband, is only a variation of those of Farquhar, of the same class as his Sir Harry Wildair and others, without equal spirit. A great deal of the story of the Jealous Wife is borrowed from Fielding; but so faintly, that the resemblance is hardly discernible till you are apprised of it. The Jealous Wife herself is, however, a dramatic *chef-d'œuvre*, and worthy of being acted as often, and better than it is. Sir Harry Beagle is a true fox-hunting English squire. The Clandestine Marriage is nearly without a fault; and has some lighter theatrical graces, which I suspect Garrick threw into it. *Canton* is, I should think, his; though this classification of him among the ornamental parts of the play may seem whimsical Garrick's genius does not appear to have been equal to the construction of a solid drama; but he could retouch and embellish with great gaiety and knowledge of the technicalities of his art. Garrick not only produced joint-pieces and after-pieces, but often set off the plays of his friends and contemporaries with the garnish, the *sauce piquant*, of prologues and epilogues, at which he had an admirable knack.—The elder Colman's translation of Terence, I may here add, has always been considered, by good judges, as an equal proof of the author's knowledge of the Latin language, and taste in his own.

Bickerstaff's plays and comic operas are continually acted: they come under the class of mediocrity, generally speaking. Their popularity seems to be chiefly owing to the unaffected ease and want of pretension with which they are written, with a certain humorous *naïveté* in the lower characters, and an exquisite adaptation of the music to the songs. His Love in a Village is one of the most delightful comic operas on the stage. It is truly pastoral; and the sense of music hovers over the very scene like the breath of morning. In his alteration of the Tartuffe he has spoiled the Hypocrite, but he has added Maw-worm.

Mrs. Cowley's comedy of the Belles' Stratagem, Who's the Dupe, and others, are of the second or third class: they are rather *refaccimentos* of the characters, incidents, and materials of former writers, got up with considerable liveliness and ingenuity, than original compositions, with marked qualities of their own.

Goldsmith's Good-natured Man is inferior to She Stoops to Conquer; and even this last play, with all its shifting vivacity, is rather a sportive and whimsical effusion of the author's fancy, a delightful and delicately managed caricature, than a genuine comedy.

Murphy's plays of All in the Wrong and Know Your Own Mind, are admirably written; with sense, spirit, and conception of character: but without any great effect of the humorous, or that truth of feeling which distinguishes the boundary between the absurdities of natural character and the gratuitous fictions of the poet's pen. The heroes of these two plays, Millamour and Sir Benjamin Constant, are too ridiculous in their caprices to be tolerated, except in farce; and yet their follies are so flimsy, so motiveless, and fine-spun, as not to be intelligible, or to have any effect in their only proper sphere. Both his principal pieces are said to have suffered by their similarity, first, to Colman's Jealous Wife, and next to the School for Scandal, though in both cases he had the undoubted priority. It is hard that the fate of plagiarism should attend upon originality: yet it is clear that the elements of the School for Scandal are not sparingly scattered in Murphy's comedy of Know your own Mind, which appeared before the latter play, only to be eclipsed by it. This brings me to speak of Sheridan.

Mr. Sheridan has been justly called 'a dramatic star of the first magnitude:' and, indeed, among the comic writers of the last century, he 'shines like Hesperus among the lesser lights.' He has left four several dramas behind him, all different or of different kinds, and all excellent in their way;—the School for Scandal, the Rivals, the Duenna, and the Critic. The attraction of this last piece is, however, less in the mock-tragedy rehearsed, than in the dialogue of the comic scenes, and in the character of Sir Fretful Plagiary, which is supposed to have been intended for Cumberland. If some of the characters in the School for Scandal were contained in Murphy's comedy of Know your own Mind (and certainly some of Dashwoud's detached speeches and satirical sketches are written with quite as firm and masterly a hand as any of those given to the members of the scandalous club, Mrs. Candour or Lady Sneerwell), yet they were buried in it for want of grouping and relief, like the colours of a well-drawn picture sunk in the canvass. Sheridan brought them out, and exhibited them in all their glory. If that gem, the character of Joseph Surface, was Murphy's, the splendid and more valuable setting was Sheridan's. He took Murphy's Malvil from his lurking-place in the closet, and 'dragged the struggling monster into day' upon the stage. That is, he gave interest, life, and action, or, in other words, its dramatic being, to the mere conception and written

specimens of a character. This is the merit of Sheridan's comedies, that every thing in them *tells*; there is no labour in vain. His Comic Muse does not go about prying into obscure corners, or collecting idle curiosities, but shews her laughing face, and points to her rich treasure—the follies of mankind. She is garlanded and crowned with roses and vine-leaves. Her eyes sparkle with delight, and her heart runs over with good-natured malice. Her step is firm and light, and her ornaments consummate! The School for Scandal is, if not the most original, perhaps the most finished and faultless comedy which we have. When it is acted, you hear people all around you exclaiming, 'Surely it is impossible for any thing to be cleverer.' The scene in which Charles sells all the old family pictures but his uncle's, who is the purchaser in disguise, and that of the discovery of Lady Teazle when the screen falls, are among the happiest and most highly wrought that comedy, in its wide and brilliant range, can boast. Besides the wit and ingenuity of this play, there is a genial spirit of frankness and generosity about it, that relieves the heart as well as clears the lungs. It professes a faith in the natural goodness, as well as habitual depravity of human nature. While it strips off the mask of hypocrisy, it inspires a confidence between man and man. As often as it is acted, it must serve to clear the air of that low, creeping, pestilent fog of cant and mysticism, which threatens to confound every native impulse, or honest conviction, in the nauseous belief of a perpetual lie, and the laudable profession of systematic hypocrisy.—The character of Lady Teazle is not well made out by the author; nor has it been well represented on the stage since the time of Miss Farren.—The Rivals is a play of even more action and incident, but of less wit and satire than the School for Scandal. It is as good as a novel in the reading, and has the broadest and most palpable effect on the stage. If Joseph Surface and Charles have a smack of Tom Jones and Blifil in their moral constitution, Sir Anthony Absolute and Mrs. Malaprop remind us of honest Matthew Bramble and his sister Tabitha, in their tempers and dialect. Acres is a distant descendant of Sir Andrew Ague-cheek. It must be confessed of this author, as Falstaff says of some one, that 'he had damnable iteration in him!' The Duenna is a perfect work of art. It has the utmost sweetness and point. The plot, the characters, the dialogue, are all complete in themselves, and they are all his own; and the songs are the best that ever were written, except those in the Beggar's Opera. They have a joyous spirit of intoxication in them, and a strain of the most melting tenderness. Compare the softness of that beginning,

'Had I heart for falsehood framed,'

with the spirited defiance to Fortune in the lines,

> 'Half thy malice youth could bear,
> And the rest a bumper drown.'

It would have been too much for the author of these elegant and classic productions not to have had some drawbacks on his felicity and fame. But even the applause of nations and the favour of princes cannot always be enjoyed with impunity.—Sheridan was not only an excellent dramatic writer, but a first-rate parliamentary speaker. His characteristics as an orator were manly, unperverted good sense, and keen irony. Wit, which has been thought a two-edged weapon, was by him always employed on the same side of the question—I think, on the right one. His set and more laboured speeches, as that on the Begum's affairs, were proportionably abortive and unimpressive: but no one was equal to him in replying, on the spur of the moment, to pompous absurdity, and unravelling the web of flimsy sophistry. He was the last accomplished debater of the House of Commons.—His character will, however, soon be drawn by one who has all the ability, and every inclination to do him justice; who knows how to bestow praise and to deserve it; by one who is himself an ornament of private and of public life; a satirist, beloved by his friends; a wit and a patriot to-boot; a poet, and an honest man.

Macklin's Man of the World has one powerfully written character, that of Sir Pertinax Macsycophant, but it required Cooke's acting to make it thoroughly effectual.

Mr. Holcroft, in his Road to Ruin, set the example of that style of comedy, in which the *slang* phrases of jockey-noblemen and the humours of the four-in-hand club are blended with the romantic sentiments of distressed damsels and philosophic waiting-maids, and in which he has been imitated by the most successful of our living writers, unless we make a separate class for the school of Cumberland, who was almost entirely devoted to the *comedie larmoyante*, and who, passing from the light, volatile spirit of his West-Indian to the mawkish sensibility of the Wheel of Fortune, linked the Muse of English comedy to the genius of German tragedy, where she has since remained, like Christabel fallen asleep in the Witch's arms, and where I shall leave her, as I have not the poet's privilege to break the spell.

There are two other writers whom I have omitted to mention, but not forgotten: they are our two immortal farce-writers, the authors of the Mayor of Garratt and the Agreeable Surprise. If Foote has been called our English Aristophanes, O'Keeffe might well be called

our English Moliere. The scale of the modern writer was smaller, but the spirit is the same. In light, careless laughter, and pleasant exaggerations of the humorous, we have had no one equal to him. There is no labour or contrivance in his scenes, but the drollery of his subject seems to strike irresistibly upon his fancy, and run away with his discretion as it does with ours. His Cowslip and Lingo are Touchstone and Audrey revived. He is himself a Modern Antique. His fancy has all the quaintness and extravagance of the old writers, with the ease and lightness which the moderns arrogate to themseves. All his pieces are delightful, but the Agreeable Surprise is the most so. There are in this some of the most felicitous blunders in situation and character that can be conceived; and in Lingo's superb replication, 'A scholar! I was a master of scholars,' he has hit the height of the ridiculous. Foote had more dry, sarcastic humour, and more knowledge of the world. His farces are bitter satires, more or less personal, as it happened. Mother Cole, in the Minor, and Mr. Smirk the Auctioneer, in Taste, with their coadjutors, are rich cut-and-come-again, 'pleasant, though wrong.' But the Mayor of Garratt is his *magnum opus* in this line. Some comedies are long farces: this farce is a comedy in little. It is also one of the best acted farces that we have. The acting of Dowton and Russell, in Major Sturgeon and Jerry Sneak, cannot be too much praised: Foote himself would have been satisfied with it. The strut, the bluster, the hollow swaggering, and turkey-cock swell of the Major; and Jerry's meekness, meanness, folly, good-nature, and hen-pecked air, are assuredly done to the life. The latter character is even better than the former, which is saying a bold word. Dowton's art is only an imitation of art, of an affected or assumed character; but in Russell's Jerry you see the very soul of nature, in a fellow that is 'pigeon-livered and lacks gall,' laid open and anatomized. You can see that his heart is no bigger than a pin, and his head as soft as a pippin. His whole aspect is chilled and frightened, as if he had been dipped in a pond; and yet he looks as if he would like to be snug and comfortable, if he durst. He smiles as if he would be friends with you upon any terms; and the tears come in his eyes because you will not let him. The tones of his voice are prophetic as the cuckoo's under-song. His words are made of water-gruel. The scene in which he tries to make a confidant of the Major is great; and his song of 'Robinson Crusoe' as melancholy as the island itself. The reconciliation-scene with his wife, and his exclamation over her, 'to think that I should make my Molly *veep*!' are pathetic, if the last stage of human infirmity is so. This farce appears to me to be both moral and entertaining; yet it does not take. It is considered

as an unjust satire on the city, and the country at large; and there is a very frequent repetition of the word 'nonsense' in the house, during the performance. Mr. Dowton was even hissed, either from the upper boxes or gallery, in his speech recounting the marching of his corps 'from Brentford to Ealing, and from Ealing to Acton;' and several persons in the pit, who thought the whole *low*, were for going out. This shows well for the progress of civilization. I suppose the manners described in the Mayor of Garratt have, in the last forty years, become obsolete, and the characters ideal: we have no longer either hen-pecked or brutal husbands, or domineering wives; the Miss Molly Jollops no longer wed Jerry Sneaks, or admire the brave Major Sturgeons on the other side of Temple-bar; all our soldiers have become heroes, and our magistrates respectable, and the farce of life is o'er.

One more name, and I have done. It is that of Peter Pindar. The historian of Sir Joseph Banks and the Emperor of Morocco, of the Pilgrims and the Peas, of the Royal Academy, and of Mr. Whitbread's brewing-vat, the bard in whom the nation and the king delighted, is old and blind, but still merry and wise:—remembering how he has made the world laugh in his time, and not repenting of the mirth he has given; with an involuntary smile lighted up at the mad pranks of his Muse, and the lucky hits of his pen—'faint picture of those flashes of his spirit, that were wont to set the table in a roar;' like his own Expiring Taper, bright and fitful to the last; tagging a rhyme or conning his own epitaph; and waiting for the last summons, GRATEFUL and CONTENTED![1]

I have thus gone through the history of that part of our literature, which I had proposed to myself to treat of. I have only to add, by way of explanation, that in some few parts I had anticipated myself in fugitive or periodical publications; and I thought it better to repeat what I had already stated to the best of my ability, than alter it for the worse. These parts bear, however, a very small proportion to the whole; and I have used such diligence and care as I could, in adding to them whatever appeared necessary to complete the general view of the subject, or make it (as far as lay in my power) interesting to others.

[1] This ingenious and popular writer is since dead.

THE END.

LECTURES ON THE DRAMATIC LITERATURE OF THE AGE OF ELIZABETH

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Published in 1820 in one 8vo. volume with the following title-page: 'Lectures chiefly on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth. Delivered at the Surry Institution. By William Hazlitt. "Not rough and barren are the winding ways Of hoar Antiquity, but strewn with flowers." T. Warton. London: Stoddart and Steuart, 81, Strand; and Bell and Bradfute, Edinburgh. 1820.' In the following year the volume was taken over by the publisher of *Table Talk* and a 'second edition' issued consisting of the unsold sheets, with a new half-title and title. The former reads simply 'Hazlitt's Lectures;' on the latter the word 'chiefly' and the quotation are dropped and the Surrey Institution is so spelt. The imprint is: 'London: John Warren, Old Bond Street. MDCCCXXI.' An *Erratum* behind the Advertisement, 'Page 18, l. 20, *for* "wildnesses," *read* wildernesses,' has been corrected in the present text.

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ADVERTISEMENT

By the Age of Elizabeth (as it relates to the History of our Literature) I would be understood to mean the time from the Reformation, to the end of Charles I. including the Writers of a certain School or style of Poetry or Prose, who flourished together or immediately succeeded one another within this period. I have, in the following pages, said little of two of the greatest Writers of that Age, Shakespear and Spenser, because I had treated of them separately in former Publications.

LECTURES ON

THE AGE OF ELIZABETH, &c.

LECTURE I.—INTRODUCTORY

GENERAL VIEW OF THE SUBJECT

The age of Elizabeth was distinguished, beyond, perhaps, any other in our history, by a number of great men, famous in different ways, and whose names have come down to us with unblemished honours; statesmen, warriors, divines, scholars, poets, and philosophers, Raleigh, Drake, Coke, Hooker, and higher and more sounding still, and still more frequent in our mouths, Shakespear, Spenser, Sidney, Bacon, Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, men whom fame has eternised in her long and lasting scroll, and who, by their words and acts, were benefactors of their country, and ornaments of human nature. Their attainments of different kinds bore the same general stamp, and it was sterling: what they did, had the mark of their age and country upon it. Perhaps the genius of Great Britain (if I may so speak without offence or flattery), never shone out fuller or brighter, or looked more like itself, than at this period. Our writers and great men had something in them that savoured of the soil from which they grew: they were not French, they were not Dutch, or German, or Greek, or Latin; they were truly English. They did not look out of themselves to see what they should be; they sought for truth and nature, and found it in themselves. There was no tinsel, and but little art; they were not the spoiled children of affectation and refinement, but a bold, vigorous, independent race of thinkers, with prodigious strength and energy, with none but natural grace, and heartfelt unobtrusive delicacy. They were not at all sophisticated. The mind of their country was great in them, and it prevailed. With their learning and unexampled acquirement, they did not forget that they were men: with all their endeavours after excellence, they did not lay aside the strong original bent and character of their minds.

What they performed was chiefly nature's handy-work; and time has claimed it for his own.—To these, however, might be added others not less learned, nor with a scarce less happy vein, but less fortunate in the event, who, though as renowned in their day, have sunk into 'mere oblivion,' and of whom the only record (but that the noblest) is to be found in their works. Their works and their names, 'poor, poor dumb names,' are all that remains of such men as Webster, Deckar, Marston, Marlow, Chapman, Heywood, Middleton, and Rowley! 'How lov'd, how honour'd once, avails them not:' though they were the friends and fellow-labourers of Shakespear, sharing his fame and fortunes with him, the rivals of Jonson, and the masters of Beaumont and Fletcher's well-sung woes! They went out one by one unnoticed, like evening lights; or were swallowed up in the headlong torrent of puritanic zeal which succeeded, and swept away every thing in its unsparing course, throwing up the wrecks of taste and genius at random, and at long fitful intervals, amidst the painted gew-gaws and foreign frippery of the reign of Charles II. and from which we are only now recovering the scattered fragments and broken images to erect a temple to true Fame! How long, before it will be completed?

If I can do any thing to rescue some of these writers from hopeless obscurity, and to do them right, without prejudice to well-deserved reputation, I shall have succeeded in what I chiefly propose. I shall not attempt, indeed, to adjust the spelling, or restore the pointing, as if the genius of poetry lay hid in errors of the press, but leaving these weightier matters of criticism to those who are more able and willing to bear the burden, try to bring out their real beauties to the eager sight, 'draw the curtain of Time, and shew the picture of Genius,' restraining my own admiration within reasonable bounds!

There is not a lower ambition, a poorer way of thought, than that which would confine all excellence, or arrogate its final accomplishment to the present, or modern times. We ordinarily speak and think of those who had the misfortune to write or live before us, as labouring under very singular privations and disadvantages in not having the benefit of those improvements which we have made, as buried in the grossest ignorance, or the slaves 'of poring pedantry'; and we make a cheap and infallible estimate of their progress in civilization upon a graduated scale of perfectibility, calculated from the meridian of our own times. If we have pretty well got rid of the narrow bigotry that would limit all sense or virtue to our own country, and have fraternized, like true cosmopolites, with our neighbours and contemporaries, we have made our self-love amends

by letting the generation we live in engross nearly all our admiration and by pronouncing a sweeping sentence of barbarism and ignorance on our ancestry backwards, from the commencement (as near as can be) of the nineteenth, or the latter end of the eighteenth century. From thence we date a new era, the dawn of our own intellect and that of the world, like 'the sacred influence of light' glimmering on the confines of Chaos and old night; new manners rise, and all the cumbrous 'pomp of elder days' vanishes, and is lost in worse than Gothic darkness. Pavilioned in the glittering pride of our superficial accomplishments and upstart pretensions, we fancy that every thing beyond that magic circle is prejudice and error; and all, before the present enlightened period, but a dull and useless blank in the great map of time. We are so dazzled with the gloss and novelty of modern discoveries, that we cannot take into our mind's eye the vast expanse, the lengthened perspective of human intellect, and a cloud hangs over and conceals its loftiest monuments, if they are removed to a little distance from us—the cloud of our own vanity and shortsightedness. The modern sciolist *stultifies* all understanding but his own, and that which he conceives like his own. We think, in this age of reason and consummation of philosophy, because we knew nothing twenty or thirty years ago, and began to think then for the first time in our lives, that the rest of mankind were in the same predicament, and never knew any thing till we did; that the world had grown old in sloth and ignorance, had dreamt out its long minority of five thousand years in a dozing state, and that it first began to wake out of sleep, to rouse itself, and look about it, startled by the light of our unexpected discoveries, and the noise we made about them. Strange error of our infatuated self-love! Because the clothes we remember to have seen worn when we were children, are now out of fashion, and our grandmothers were then old women, we conceive with magnanimous continuity of reasoning, that it must have been much worse three hundred years before, and that grace, youth, and beauty are things of modern date—as if nature had ever been old, or the sun had first shone on our folly and presumption. Because, in a word, the last generation, when tottering off the stage, were not so active, so sprightly, and so promising as we were, we begin to imagine, that people formerly must have crawled about in a feeble, torpid state, like flies in winter, in a sort of dim twilight of the understanding; 'nor can we think what thoughts they could conceive,' in the absence of all those topics that so agreeably enliven and diversify our conversation and literature, mistaking the imperfection of our knowledge for the defect of their organs, as if it was necessary for us to have a register and certificate of their thoughts,

or as if, because they did not see with our eyes, hear with our ears, and understand with our understandings, they could hear, see, and understand nothing. A falser inference could not be drawn, nor one more contrary to the maxims and cautions of a wise humanity. 'Think,' says Shakespear, the prompter of good and true feelings, 'there 's livers out of Britain.' So there have been thinkers, and great and sound ones, before our time. They had the same capacities that we have, sometimes greater motives for their exertion, and, for the most part, the same subject-matter to work upon. What we learn from nature, we may hope to do as well as they; what we learn from them, we may in general expect to do worse.—What is, I think, as likely as any thing to cure us of this overweening admiration of the present, and unmingled contempt for past times, is the looking at the finest old pictures; at Raphael's heads, at Titian's faces, at Claude's landscapes. We have there the evidence of the senses, without the alterations of opinion or disguise of language. We there see the blood circulate through the veins (long before it was known that it did so), the same red and white 'by nature's own sweet and cunning hand laid on,' the same thoughts passing through the mind and seated on the lips, the same blue sky, and glittering sunny vales, 'where Pan, knit with the Graces and the Hours in dance, leads on the eternal spring.' And we begin to feel, that nature and the mind of man are not a thing of yesterday, as we had been led to suppose; and that 'there are more things between heaven and earth, than were ever dreamt of in our philosophy.'—Or grant that we improve, in some respects, in a uniformly progressive ratio, and build, Babel-high, on the foundation of other men's knowledge, as in matters of science and speculative inquiry, where by going often over the same general ground, certain general conclusions have been arrived at, and in the number of persons reasoning on a given subject, truth has at last been hit upon, and long-established error exploded; yet this does not apply to cases of individual power and knowledge, to a million of things beside, in which we are still to seek as much as ever, and in which we can only hope to find, by going to the fountain-head of thought and experience. We are quite wrong in supposing (as we are apt to do), that we can plead an exclusive title to wit and wisdom, to taste and genius, as the net produce and clear reversion of the age we live in, and that all we have to do to be great, is to despise those who have gone before us as nothing.

Or even if we admit a saving clause in this sweeping proscription, and do not make the rule absolute, the very nature of the exceptions shews the spirit in which they are made. We single out one or two

striking instances, say Shakespear or Lord Bacon, which we would fain treat as prodigies, and as a marked contrast to the rudeness and barbarism that surrounded them. These we delight to dwell upon and magnify; the praise and wonder we heap upon their shrines, are at the expence of the time in which they lived, and would leave it poor indeed. We make them out something more than human, 'matchless, divine, what we will,' so to make them no rule for their age, and no infringement of the abstract claim to superiority which we set up. Instead of letting them reflect any lustre, or add any credit to the period of history to which they rightfully belong, we only make use of their example to insult and degrade it still more beneath our own level.

It is the present fashion to speak with veneration of old English literature; but the homage we pay to it is more akin to the rites of superstition, than the worship of true religion. Our faith is doubtful; our love cold; our knowledge little or none. We now and then repeat the names of some of the old writers by rote; but we are shy of looking into their works. Though we seem disposed to think highly of them, and to give them every credit for a masculine and original vein of thought, as a matter of literary courtesy and enlargement of taste, we are afraid of coming to the proof, as too great a trial of our candour and patience. We regard the enthusiastic admiration of these obsolete authors, or a desire to make proselytes to a belief in their extraordinary merits, as an amiable weakness, a pleasing delusion; and prepare to listen to some favourite passage, that may be referred to in support of this singular taste, with an incredulous smile; and are in no small pain for the result of the hazardous experiment; feeling much the same awkward condescending disposition to patronise these first crude attempts at poetry and lispings of the Muse, as when a fond parent brings forward a bashful child to make a display of its wit or learning. We hope the best, put a good face on the matter, but are sadly afraid the thing cannot answer.—Dr. Johnson said of these writers generally, that 'they were sought after because they were scarce, and would not have been scarce, had they been much esteemed.' His decision is neither true history nor sound criticism. They were esteemed, and they deserved to be so.

One cause that might be pointed out here, as having contributed to the long-continued neglect of our earlier writers, lies in the very nature of our academic institutions, which unavoidably neutralizes a taste for the productions of native genius, estranges the mind from the history of our own literature, and makes it in each successive age like a book sealed. The Greek and Roman classics are a sort of

privileged text-books, the standing order of the day, in a University education, and leave little leisure for a competent acquaintance with, or due admiration of, a whole host of able writers of our own, who are suffered to moulder in obscurity on the shelves of our libraries, with a decent reservation of one or two top-names, that are cried up for form's sake, and to save the national character. Thus we keep a few of these always ready in capitals, and strike off the rest, to prevent the tendency to a superfluous population in the republic of letters; in other words, to prevent the writers from becoming more numerous than the readers. The ancients are become effete in this respect, they no longer increase and multiply; or if they have imitators among us, no one is expected to read, and still less to admire them. It is not possible that the learned professors and the reading public should clash in this way, or necessary for them to use any precautions against each other. But it is not the same with the living languages, where there is danger of being overwhelmed by the crowd of competitors; and pedantry has combined with ignorance to cancel their unsatisfied claims.

We affect to wonder at Shakespear, and one or two more of that period, as solitary instances upon record; whereas it is our own dearth of information that makes the waste; for there is no time more populous of intellect, or more prolific of intellectual wealth, than the one we are speaking of. Shakespear did not look upon himself in this light, as a sort of monster of poetical genius, or on his contemporaries as 'less than smallest dwarfs,' when he speaks with true, not false modesty, of himself and them, and of his wayward thoughts, 'desiring this man's art, and that man's scope.' We fancy that there were no such men, that could either add to or take any thing away from him, but such there were. He indeed overlooks and commands the admiration of posterity, but he does it from the *tableland* of the age in which he lived. He towered above his fellows, 'in shape and gesture proudly eminent'; but he was one of a race of giants, the tallest, the strongest, the most graceful, and beautiful of them; but it was a common and a noble brood. He was not something sacred and aloof from the vulgar herd of men, but shook hands with nature and the circumstances of the time, and is distinguished from his immediate contemporaries, not in kind, but in degree and greater variety of excellence. He did not form a class or species by himself, but belonged to a class or species. His age was necessary to him; nor could he have been wrenched from his place in the edifice of which he was so conspicuous a part, without equal injury to himself and it. Mr. Wordsworth says of Milton, 'that his soul was like a star, and dwelt apart.' This cannot be said with any

propriety of Shakespear, who certainly moved in a constellation of bright luminaries, and 'drew after him a third part of the heavens.' If we allow, for argument's sake (or for truth's, which is better), that he was in himself equal to all his competitors put together; yet there was more dramatic excellence in that age than in the whole of the period that has elapsed since. If his contemporaries, with their united strength, would hardly make one Shakespear, certain it is that all his successors would not make half a one. With the exception of a single writer, Otway, and of a single play of his (Venice Preserved), there is nobody in tragedy and dramatic poetry (I do not here speak of comedy) to be compared to the great men of the age of Shakespear, and immediately after. They are a mighty phalanx of kindred spirits closing him round, moving in the same orbit, and impelled by the same causes in their whirling and eccentric career. They had the same faults and the same excellences; the same strength and depth and richness, the same truth of character, passion, imagination, thought and language, thrown, heaped, massed together without careful polishing or exact method, but poured out in unconcerned profusion from the lap of nature and genius in boundless and unrivalled magnificence. The sweetness of Deckar, the thought of Marston, the gravity of Chapman, the grace of Fletcher and his young-eyed wit, Jonson's learned sock, the flowing vein of Middleton, Heywood's ease, the pathos of Webster, and Marlow's deep designs, add a double lustre to the sweetness, thought, gravity, grace, wit, artless nature, copiousness, ease, pathos, and sublime conceptions of Shakespear's Muse. They are indeed the scale by which we can best ascend to the true knowledge and love of him. Our admiration of them does not lessen our relish for him: but, on the contrary, increases and confirms it.—For such an extraordinary combination and development of fancy and genius many causes may be assigned; and we may seek for the chief of them in religion, in politics, in the circumstances of the time, the recent diffusion of letters, in local situation, and in the character of the men who adorned that period, and availed themselves so nobly of the advantages placed within their reach.

I shall here attempt to give a general sketch of these causes, and of the manner in which they operated to mould and stamp the poetry of the country at the period of which I have to treat; independently of incidental and fortuitous causes, for which there is no accounting, but which, after all, have often the greatest share in determining the most important results.

The first cause I shall mention, as contributing to this general effect, was the Reformation, which had just then taken place. This

event gave a mighty impulse and increased activity to thought and inquiry, and agitated the inert mass of accumulated prejudices throughout Europe. The effect of the concussion was general; but the shock was greatest in this country. It toppled down the full-grown, intolerable abuses of centuries at a blow; heaved the ground from under the feet of bigotted faith and slavish obedience; and the roar and dashing of opinions, loosened from their accustomed hold, might be heard like the noise of an angry sea, and has never yet subsided. Germany first broke the spell of misbegotten fear, and gave the watch-word; but England joined the shout, and echoed it back with her island voice, from her thousand cliffs and craggy shores, in a longer and a louder strain. With that cry, the genius of Great Britain rose, and threw down the gauntlet to the nations. There was a mighty fermentation: the waters were out; public opinion was in a state of projection. Liberty was held out to all to think and speak the truth. Men's brains were busy; their spirits stirring; their hearts full; and their hands not idle. Their eyes were opened to expect the greatest things, and their ears burned with curiosity and zeal to know the truth, that the truth might make them free. The death-blow which had been struck at scarlet vice and bloated hypocrisy, loosened their tongues, and made the talismans and love-tokens of Popish superstition, with which she had beguiled her followers and committed abominations with the people, fall harmless from their necks.

The translation of the Bible was the chief engine in the great work. It threw open, by a secret spring, the rich treasures of religion and morality, which had been there locked up as in a shrine. It revealed the visions of the prophets, and conveyed the lessons of inspired teachers (such they were thought) to the meanest of the people. It gave them a common interest in the common cause. Their hearts burnt within them as they read. It gave a *mind* to the people, by giving them common subjects of thought and feeling. It cemented their union of character and sentiment: it created endless diversity and collision of opinion. They found objects to employ their faculties, and a motive in the magnitude of the consequences attached to them, to exert the utmost eagerness in the pursuit of truth, and the most daring intrepidity in maintaining it. Religious controversy sharpens the understanding by the subtlety and remoteness of the topics it discusses, and braces the will by their infinite importance. We perceive in the history of this period a nervous masculine intellect. No levity, no feebleness, no indifference; or if there were, it is a relaxation from the intense activity which gives a tone to its general character. But there is a gravity approaching to piety; a seriousness

of impression, a conscientious severity of argument, an habitual fervour and enthusiasm in their mode of handling almost every subject. The debates of the schoolmen were sharp and subtle enough; but they wanted interest and grandeur, and were besides confined to a few: they did not affect the general mass of the community. But the Bible was thrown open to all ranks and conditions 'to run and read,' with its wonderful table of contents from Genesis to the Revelations. Every village in England would present the scene so well described in Burns's Cotter's Saturday Night. I cannot think that all this variety and weight of knowledge could be thrown in all at once upon the mind of a people, and not make some impressions upon it, the traces of which might be discerned in the manners and literature of the age. For to leave more disputable points, and take only the historical parts of the Old Testament, or the moral sentiments of the New, there is nothing like them in the power of exciting awe and admiration, or of rivetting sympathy. We see what Milton has made of the account of the Creation, from the manner in which he has treated it, imbued and impregnated with the spirit of the time of which we speak. Or what is there equal (in that romantic interest and patriarchal simplicity which goes to the heart of a country, and rouses it, as it were, from its lair in wastes and wildernesses) equal to the story of Joseph and his Brethren, of Rachael and Laban, of Jacob's Dream, of Ruth and Boaz, the descriptions in the book of Job, the deliverance of the Jews out of Egypt, or the account of their captivity and return from Babylon? There is in all these parts of the Scripture, and numberless more of the same kind, to pass over the Orphic hymns of David, the prophetic denunciations of Isaiah, or the gorgeous visions of Ezekiel, an originality, a vastness of conception, a depth and tenderness of feeling, and a touching simplicity in the mode of narration, which he who does not feel, need be made of no 'penetrable stuff.' There is something in the character of Christ too (leaving religious faith quite out of the question) of more sweetness and majesty, and more likely to work a change in the mind of man, by the contemplation of its idea alone, than any to be found in history, whether actual or feigned. This character is that of a sublime humanity, such as was never seen on earth before, nor since. This shone manifestly both in his words and actions. We see it in his washing the Disciples' feet the night before his death, that unspeakable instance of humility and love, above all art, all meanness, and all pride, and in the leave he took of them on that occasion, 'My peace I give unto you, that peace which the world cannot give, give I unto you'; and in his last commandment, that 'they should love one another' Who can read the account of his behaviour on the cross,

when turning to his mother he said, 'Woman, behold thy son,' and to the Disciple John, 'Behold thy mother,' and 'from that hour that Disciple took her to his own home,' without having his heart smote within him! We see it in his treatment of the woman taken in adultery, and in his excuse for the woman who poured precious ointment on his garment as an offering of devotion and love, which is here all in all. His religion was the religion of the heart. We see it in his discourse with the Disciples as they walked together towards Emmaus, when their hearts burned within them; in his sermon from the Mount, in his parable of the good Samaritan, and in that of the Prodigal Son—in every act and word of his life, a grace, a mildness, a dignity and love, a patience and wisdom worthy of the Son of God. His whole life and being were imbued, steeped in this word, *charity*; it was the spring, the well-head from which every thought and feeling gushed into act; and it was this that breathed a mild glory from his face in that last agony upon the cross, 'when the meek Saviour bowed his head and died,' praying for his enemies. He was the first true teacher of morality; for he alone conceived the idea of a pure humanity. He redeemed man from the worship of that idol, self, and instructed him by precept and example to love his neighbour as himself, to forgive our enemies, to do good to those that curse us and despitefully use us. He taught the love of good for the sake of good, without regard to personal or sinister views, and made the affections of the heart the sole seat of morality, instead of the pride of the understanding or the sternness of the will. In answering the question, 'who is our neighbour?' as one who stands in need of our assistance, and whose wounds we can bind up, he has done more to humanize the thoughts and tame the unruly passions, than all who have tried to reform and benefit mankind. The very idea of abstract benevolence, of the desire to do good because another wants our services, and of regarding the human race as one family, the offspring of one common parent, is hardly to be found in any other code or system. It was 'to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness.' The Greeks and Romans never thought of considering others, but as they were Greeks or Romans, as they were bound to them by certain positive ties, or, on the other hand, as separated from them by fiercer antipathies. Their virtues were the virtues of political machines, their vices were the vices of demons, ready to inflict or to endure pain with obdurate and remorseless inflexibility of purpose. But in the Christian religion, 'we perceive a softness coming over the heart of a nation, and the iron scales that fence and harden it, melt and drop off.' It becomes malleable, capable of pity, of forgiveness, of relaxing in its claims, and remitting its power. We strike it, and it does not hurt

us: it is not steel or marble, but flesh and blood, clay tempered with tears, and 'soft as sinews of the new-born babe.' The gospel was first preached to the poor, for it consulted their wants and interests, not its own pride and arrogance. It first promulgated the equality of mankind in the community of duties and benefits. It denounced the iniquities of the chief Priests and Pharisees, and declared itself at variance with principalities and powers, for it sympathizes not with the oppressor, but the oppressed. It first abolished slavery, for it did not consider the power of the will to inflict injury, as clothing it with a right to do so. Its law is good, not power. It at the same time tended to wean the mind from the grossness of sense, and a particle of its divine flame was lent to brighten and purify the lamp of love!

There have been persons who, being sceptics as to the divine mission of Christ, have taken an unaccountable prejudice to his doctrines, and have been disposed to deny the merit of his character; but this was not the feeling of the great men in the age of Elizabeth (whatever might be their belief) one of whom says of him, with a boldness equal to its piety:

> 'The best of men
> That e'er wore earth about him, was a sufferer;
> A soft, meek, patient, humble, tranquil spirit;
> The first true gentleman that ever breathed.'

This was old honest Deckar, and the lines ought to embalm his memory to every one who has a sense either of religion, or philosophy, or humanity, or true genius. Nor can I help thinking, that we may discern the traces of the influence exerted by religious faith in the spirit of the poetry of the age of Elizabeth, in the means of exciting terror and pity, in the delineation of the passions of grief, remorse, love, sympathy, the sense of shame, in the fond desires, the longings after immortality, in the heaven of hope, and the abyss of despair it lays open to us.[1]

The literature of this age then, I would say, was strongly influenced (among other causes), first by the spirit of Christianity, and secondly by the spirit of Protestantism.

The effects of the Reformation on politics and philosophy may be seen in the writings and history of the next and of the following ages. They are still at work, and will continue to be so. The effects on the poetry of the time were chiefly confined to the moulding of the character, and giving a powerful impulse to the intellect of the

[1] In some Roman Catholic countries, pictures in part supplied the place of the translation of the Bible: and this dumb art arose in the silence of the written oracles.

country. The immediate use or application that was made of religion to subjects of imagination and fiction was not (from an obvious ground of separation) so direct or frequent, as that which was made of the classical and romantic literature.

For much about the same time, the rich and fascinating stores of the Greek and Roman mythology, and those of the romantic poetry of Spain and Italy, were eagerly explored by the curious, and thrown open in translations to the admiring gaze of the vulgar. This last circumstance could hardly have afforded so much advantage to the poets of that day, who were themselves, in fact, the translators, as it shews the general curiosity and increasing interest in such subjects, as a prevailing feature of the times. There were translations of Tasso by Fairfax, and of Ariosto by Harrington, of Homer and Hesiod by Chapman, and of Virgil long before, and Ovid soon after; there was Sir Thomas North's translation of Plutarch, of which Shakespear has made such admirable use in his Coriolanus and Julius Cæsar: and Ben Jonson's tragedies of Catiline and Sejanus may themselves be considered as almost literal translations into verse, of Tacitus, Sallust, and Cicero's Orations in his consulship. Boccacio, the divine Boccacio, Petrarch, Dante, the satirist Aretine, Machiavel, Castiglione, and others, were familiar to our writers, and they make occasional mention of some few French authors, as Ronsard and Du Bartas; for the French literature had not at this stage arrived at its Augustan period, and it was the imitation of their literature a century afterwards, when it had arrived at its greatest height (itself copied from the Greek and Latin), that enfeebled and impoverished our own. But of the time that we are considering, it might be said, without much extravagance, that every breath that blew, that every wave that rolled to our shores, brought with it some accession to our knowledge, which was engrafted on the national genius. In fact, all the disposeable materials that had been accumulating for a long period of time, either in our own, or in foreign countries, were now brought together, and required nothing more than to be wrought up, polished, or arranged in striking forms, for ornament and use. To this every inducement prompted, the novelty of the acquisition of knowledge in many cases, the emulation of foreign wits, and of immortal works, the want and the expectation of such works among ourselves, the opportunity and encouragement afforded for their production by leisure and affluence; and, above all, the insatiable desire of the mind to beget its own image, and to construct out of itself, and for the delight and admiration of the world and posterity, that excellence of which the idea exists hitherto only in its own breast, and the impression of which it would make as universal as the eye of heaven, the benefit as common as the

air we breathe. The first impulse of genius is to create what never existed before: the contemplation of that, which is so created, is sufficient to satisfy the demands of taste; and it is the habitual study and imitation of the original models that takes away the power, and even wish to do the like. Taste limps after genius, and from copying the artificial models, we lose sight of the living principle of nature. It is the effort we make, and the impulse we acquire, in overcoming the first obstacles, that projects us forward; it is the necessity for exertion that makes us conscious of our strength; but this necessity and this impulse once removed, the tide of fancy and enthusiasm, which is at first a running stream, soon settles and crusts into the standing pool of dulness, criticism, and *virtù*.

What also gave an unusual *impetus* to the mind of man at this period, was the discovery of the New World, and the reading of voyages and travels. Green islands and golden sands seemed to arise, as by enchantment, out of the bosom of the watery waste, and invite the cupidity, or wing the imagination of the dreaming speculator. Fairy land was realised in new and unknown worlds. 'Fortunate fields and groves and flowery vales, thrice happy isles,' were found floating 'like those Hesperian gardens famed of old,' beyond Atlantic seas, as dropt from the zenith. The people, the soil, the clime, everything gave unlimited scope to the curiosity of the traveller and reader. Other manners might be said to enlarge the bounds of knowledge, and new mines of wealth were tumbled at our feet. It is from a voyage to the Straits of Magellan that Shakespear has taken the hint of Prospero's Enchanted Island, and of the savage Caliban with his god Setebos.[1] Spenser seems to have had the same feeling in his mind in the production of his Faery Queen, and vindicates his poetic fiction on this very ground of analogy.

'Right well I wote, most mighty sovereign,
That all this famous antique history
Of some the abundance of an idle brain
Will judged be, and painted forgery,
Rather than matter of just memory:
Since none that breatheth living air, doth know
Where is that happy land of faery
Which I so much do vaunt, but no where show,
But vouch antiquities, which nobody can know.

But let that man with better sense avise,
That of the world least part to us is read:
And daily how through hardy enterprize
Many great regions are discovered,

[1] See a Voyage to the Straits of Magellan, 1594.

Which to late age were never mentioned.
Who ever heard of th' Indian Peru?
Or who in venturous vessel measured
The Amazons' huge river, now found true?
Or fruitfullest Virginia who did ever view?

Yet all these were when no man did them know,
Yet have from wisest ages hidden been:
And later times things more unknown shall show.
Why then should witless man so much misween
That nothing is but that which he hath seen?
What if within the moon's fair shining sphere,
What if in every other star unseen,
Of other worlds he happily should hear,
He wonder would much more; yet such to some appear.'

Fancy's air-drawn pictures after history's waking dream shewed like clouds over mountains; and from the romance of real life to the idlest fiction, the transition seemed easy.—Shakespear, as well as others of his time, availed himself of the old Chronicles, and of the traditions or fabulous inventions contained in them in such ample measure, and which had not yet been appropriated to the purposes of poetry or the drama. The stage was a new thing; and those who had to supply its demands laid their hands upon whatever came within their reach: they were not particular as to the means, so that they gained the end. Lear is founded upon an old ballad; Othello on an Italian novel; Hamlet on a Danish, and Macbeth on a Scotch tradition: one of which is to be found in Saxo-Grammaticus, and the last in Hollingshed. The Ghost-scenes and the Witches in each, are authenticated in the old Gothic history. There was also this connecting link between the poetry of this age and the supernatural traditions of a former one, that the belief in them was still extant, and in full force and visible operation among the vulgar (to say no more) in the time of our authors. The appalling and wild chimeras of superstition and ignorance, 'those bodiless creations that ecstacy is very cunning in,' were inwoven with existing manners and opinions, and all their effects on the passions of terror or pity might be gathered from common and actual observation—might be discerned in the workings of the face, the expressions of the tongue, the writhings of a troubled conscience. 'Your face, my Thane, is as a book where men may read strange matters.' Midnight and secret murders too, from the imperfect state of the police, were more common; and the ferocious and brutal manners that would stamp the brow of the hardened ruffian or hired assassin, more incorrigible and undisguised. The portraits of Tyrrel and Forrest were, no doubt, done from the

life. We find that the ravages of the plague, the destructive rage of fire, the poisoned chalice, lean famine, the serpent's mortal sting, and the fury of wild beasts, were the common topics of their poetry, as they were common occurrences in more remote periods of history. They were the strong ingredients thrown into the cauldron of tragedy, to make it 'thick and slab.' Man's life was (as it appears to me) more full of traps and pit-falls; of hair-breadth accidents by flood and field; more way-laid by sudden and startling evils; it trod on the brink of hope and fear; stumbled upon fate unawares; while the imagination, close behind it, caught at and clung to the shape of danger, or 'snatched a wild and fearful joy' from its escape. The accidents of nature were less provided against; the excesses of the passions and of lawless power were less regulated, and produced more strange and desperate catastrophes. The tales of Boccacio are founded on the great pestilence of Florence, Fletcher the poet died of the plague, and Marlow was stabbed in a tavern quarrel. The strict authority of parents, the inequality of ranks, or the hereditary feuds between different families, made more unhappy loves or matches.

'The course of true love never did run even.'

Again, the heroic and martial spirit which breathes in our elder writers, was yet in considerable activity in the reign of Elizabeth. 'The age of chivalry was not then quite gone, nor the glory of Europe extinguished for ever.' Jousts and tournaments were still common with the nobility in England and in foreign countries: Sir Philip Sidney was particularly distinguished for his proficiency in these exercises (and indeed fell a martyr to his ambition as a soldier) —and the gentle Surrey was still more famous, on the same account, just before him. It is true, the general use of firearms gradually superseded the necessity of skill in the sword, or bravery in the person: and as a symptom of the rapid degeneracy in this respect, we find Sir John Suckling soon after boasting of himself as one—

'Who prized black eyes, and a lucky hit
At bowls, above all the trophies of wit.'

It was comparatively an age of peace,

'Like strength reposing on his own right arm;'

but the sound of civil combat might still be heard in the distance, the spear glittered to the eye of memory, or the clashing of armour struck on the imagination of the ardent and the young. They were borderers on the savage state, on the times of war and bigotry, though in the lap of arts, of luxury, and knowledge. They stood on the

shore and saw the billows rolling after the storm: 'they heard the tumult, and were still.' The manners and out-of-door amusements were more tinctured with a spirit of adventure and romance. The war with wild beasts, &c. was more strenuously kept up in country sports. I do not think we could get from sedentary poets, who had never mingled in the vicissitudes, the dangers, or excitements of the chase, such descriptions of hunting and other athletic games, as are to be found in Shakespear's Midsummer Night's Dream, or Fletcher's Noble Kinsmen.

With respect to the good cheer and hospitable living of those times, I cannot agree with an ingenious and agreeable writer of the present day, that it was general or frequent. The very stress laid upon certain holidays and festivals, shews that they did not keep up the same Saturnalian licence and open house all the year round. They reserved themselves for great occasions, and made the best amends they could, for a year of abstinence and toil by a week of merriment and convivial indulgence. Persons in middle life at this day, who can afford a good dinner every day, do not look forward to it as any particular subject of exultation: the poor peasant, who can only contrive to treat himself to a joint of meat on a Sunday, considers it as an event in the week. So, in the old Cambridge comedy of the Returne from Parnassus, we find this indignant description of the progress of luxury in those days, put into the mouth of one of the speakers.

'Why is 't not strange to see a ragged clerke,
Some stammell weaver, or some butcher's sonne,
That scrubb'd a late within a sleeveless gowne,
When the commencement, like a morrice dance,
Hath put a bell or two about his legges,
Created him a sweet cleane gentleman:
How then he 'gins to follow fashions.
He whose thin sire dwelt in a smokye roofe,
Must take tobacco, and must wear a locke.
His thirsty dad drinkes in a wooden bowle,
But his sweet self is served in silver plate.
His hungry sire will scrape you twenty legges
For one good Christmas meal on new year's day,
But his mawe must be capon cramm'd each day.'

Act III. Scene 2.

This does not look as if in those days 'it snowed of meat and drink' as a matter of course throughout the year!—The distinctions of dress, the badges of different professions, the very signs of the shops, which we have set aside for written inscriptions over the doors, were, as Mr. Lamb observes, a sort of visible language to the imagination, and hints for thought. Like the costume of different foreign

nations, they had an immediate striking and picturesque effect, giving scope to the fancy. The surface of society was embossed with hieroglyphics, and poetry existed 'in act and complement extern.' The poetry of former times might be directly taken from real life, as our poetry is taken from the poetry of former times. Finally, the face of nature, which was the same glorious object then that it is now, was open to them; and coming first, they gathered her fairest flowers to live for ever in their verse:—the movements of the human heart were not hid from them, for they had the same passions as we, only less disguised, and less subject to controul. Deckar has given an admirable description of a mad-house in one of his plays. But it might be perhaps objected, that it was only a literal account taken from Bedlam at that time: and it might be answered, that the old poets took the same method of describing the passions and fancies of men whom they met at large, which forms the point of communion between us: for the title of the old play, 'A Mad World, my Masters,' is hardly yet obsolete; and we are pretty much the same Bedlam still, perhaps a little better managed, like the real one, and with more care and humanity shewn to the patients!

Lastly, to conclude this account; what gave a unity and common direction to all these causes, was the natural genius of the country, which was strong in these writers in proportion to their strength. We are a nation of islanders, and we cannot help it; nor mend ourselves if we would. We are something in ourselves, nothing when we try to ape others. Music and painting are not our *forte*: for what we have done in that way has been little, and that borrowed from others with great difficulty. But we may boast of our poets and philosophers. That's something. We have had strong heads and sound hearts among us. Thrown on one side of the world, and left to bustle for ourselves, we have fought out many a battle for truth and freedom. That is our natural style; and it were to be wished we had in no instance departed from it. Our situation has given us a certain cast of thought and character; and our liberty has enabled us to make the most of it. We are of a stiff clay, not moulded into every fashion, with stubborn joints not easily bent. We are slow to think, and therefore impressions do not work upon us till they act in masses. We are not forward to express our feelings, and therefore they do not come from us till they force their way in the most impetuous eloquence. Our language is, as it were, to begin anew, and we make use of the most singular and boldest combinations to explain ourselves. Our wit comes from us, 'like birdlime, brains and all.' We pay too little attention to form and method, leave our works in an unfinished state, but still the materials we work in are

solid and of nature's mint; we do not deal in counterfeits. We both under and over-do, but we keep an eye to the prominent features, the main chance. We are more for weight than show; care only about what interests ourselves, instead of trying to impose upon others by plausible appearances, and are obstinate and intractable in not conforming to common rules, by which many arrive at their ends with half the real waste of thought and trouble. We neglect all but the principal object, gather our force to make a great blow, bring it down, and relapse into sluggishness and indifference again. *Materiam superabat opus*, cannot be said of us. We may be accused of grossness, but not of flimsiness; of extravagance, but not of affectation; of want of art and refinement, but not of a want of truth and nature. Our literature, in a word, is Gothic and grotesque; unequal and irregular; not cast in a previous mould, nor of one uniform texture, but of great weight in the whole, and of incomparable value in the best parts. It aims at an excess of beauty or power, hits or misses, and is either very good indeed, or absolutely good for nothing. This character applies in particular to our literature in the age of Elizabeth, which is its best period, before the introduction of a rage for French rules and French models; for whatever may be the value of our own original style of composition, there can be neither offence nor presumption in saying, that it is at least better than our second-hand imitations of others. Our understanding (such as it is, and must remain to be good for any thing) is not a thoroughfare for common places, smooth as the palm of one's hand, but full of knotty points and jutting excrescences, rough, uneven, overgrown with brambles; and I like this aspect of the mind (as some one said of the country), where nature keeps a good deal of the soil in her own hands. Perhaps the genius of our poetry has more of Pan than of Apollo; 'but Pan is a God, Apollo is no more!'

LECTURE II

ON THE DRAMATIC WRITERS CONTEMPORARY WITH SHAKESPEAR, LYLY, MARLOW, HEYWOOD, MIDDLETON, AND ROWLEY

The period of which I shall have to treat (from the Reformation to the middle of Charles I.) was prolific in dramatic excellence, even more than in any other. In approaching it, we seem to be approaching the RICH STROND described in Spenser, where treasures of all kinds

lay scattered, or rather crowded together on the shore in inexhaustible but unregarded profusion, 'rich as the oozy bottom of the deep in sunken wrack and sumless treasuries.' We are confounded with the variety, and dazzled with the dusky splendour of names sacred in their obscurity, and works gorgeous in their decay, 'majestic, though in ruin,' like Guyon when he entered the Cave of Mammon, and was shewn the massy pillars and huge unwieldy fragments of gold, covered with dust and cobwebs, and 'shedding a faint shadow of uncertain light,

'Such as a lamp whose light doth fade away,
Or as the moon clothed with cloudy night
Doth shew to him that walks in fear and sad affright.'

The dramatic literature of this period only wants exploring, to fill the enquiring mind with wonder and delight, and to convince us that we have been wrong in lavishing all our praise on 'new-born gauds, though they are made and moulded of things past;' and in 'giving to dust, that is a little gilded, more laud than gilt o'er-dusted.' In short, the discovery of such an unsuspected and forgotten mine of wealth will be found amply to repay the labour of the search, and it will be hard, if in most cases curiosity does not end in admiration, and modesty teach us wisdom. A few of the most singular productions of these times remain unclaimed; of others the authors are uncertain; many of them are joint productions of different pens; but of the best the writers' names are in general known, and obviously stamped on the productions themselves. The names of Ben Jonson, for instance, Massinger, Beaumont and Fletcher, are almost, though not quite, as familiar to us, as that of Shakespear; and their works still keep regular possession of the stage. Another set of writers included in the same general period (the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century), who are next, or equal, or sometimes superior to these in power, but whose names are now little known, and their writings nearly obsolete, are Lyly, Marlow, Marston, Chapman, Middleton, and Rowley, Heywood, Webster, Deckar, and Ford. I shall devote the present and two following Lectures to the best account I can give of these, and shall begin with some of the least known.

The earliest tragedy of which I shall take notice (I believe the earliest that we have) is that of Ferrex and Porrex, or Gorboduc (as it has been generally called), the production of Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst, afterwards created Earl of Dorset, assisted by one Thomas Norton. This was first acted with applause before the Queen in 1561, the noble author being then quite a young man.

This tragedy being considered as the first in our language, is certainly a curiosity, and in other respects it is also remarkable; though, perhaps, enough has been said about it. As a work of genius, it may be set down as nothing, for it contains hardly a memorable line or passage; as a work of art, and the first of its kind attempted in the language, it may be considered as a monument of the taste and skill of the authors. Its merit is confined to the regularity of the plot and metre, to its general good sense, and strict attention to common decorum. If the poet has not stamped the peculiar genius of his age upon this first attempt, it is no inconsiderable proof of strength of mind and conception sustained by its own sense of propriety alone, to have so far anticipated the taste of succeeding times, as to have avoided any glaring offence against rules and models, which had no existence in his day. Or perhaps a truer solution might be, that there were as yet no examples of a more ambiguous and irregular kind to tempt him to err, and as he had not the impulse or resources within himself to strike out a new path, he merely adhered with modesty and caution to the classical models with which, as a scholar, he was well acquainted. The language of the dialogue is clear, unaffected, and intelligible without the smallest difficulty, even to this day; it has 'no figures nor no fantasies,' to which the most fastidious critic can object, but the dramatic power is nearly none at all. It is written expressly to set forth the dangers and mischiefs that arise from the division of sovereign power; and the several speakers dilate upon the different views of the subject in turn, like clever schoolboys set to compose a thesis, or declaim upon the fatal consequences of ambition, and the uncertainty of human affairs. The author, in the end, declares for the doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance; a doctrine which indeed was seldom questioned at that time of day. Eubulus, one of the old king's counsellors, thus gives his opinion—

> 'Eke fully with the duke my mind agrees,
> That no cause serves, whereby the subject may
> Call to account the doings of his prince;
> Much less in blood by sword to work revenge:
> No more than may the hand cut off the head.
> In act nor speech, no nor in secret thought,
> The subject may rebel against his lord,
> Or judge of him that sits in Cæsar's seat,
> With grudging mind to damn those he mislikes.
> Though kings forget to govern as they ought,
> Yet subjects must obey as they are bound.'

Yet how little he was borne out in this inference by the unbiassed dictates of his own mind, may appear from the freedom and unguarded

boldness of such lines as the following, addressed by a favourite to a prince, as courtly advice.

> 'Know ye that lust of kingdoms hath no law:
> The Gods do bear and well allow in kings
> The things that they abhor in rascal routs.
> When kings on slender quarrels run to wars,
> And then in cruel and unkindly wise
> Command thefts, rapes, murder of innocents,
> The spoil of towns, ruins of mighty realms;
> Think you such princes do suppose themselves
> Subject to laws of kind and fear of Gods?
> Murders and violent thefts in private men
> Are heinous crimes, and full of foul reproach;
> Yet none offence, but deck'd with noble name
> Of glorious conquests in the hands of kings.'

The principal characters make as many invocations to the names of their children, their country, and their friends, as Cicero in his Orations, and all the topics insisted upon are open, direct, urged in the face of day, with no more attention to time or place, to an enemy who overhears, or an accomplice to whom they are addressed; in a word, with no more dramatic insinuation or byeplay than the pleadings in a court of law. Almost the only passage that I can instance, as rising above this didactic tone of mediocrity into the pathos of poetry, is one where Marcella laments the untimely death of her lover, Ferrex.

> 'Ah! noble prince, how oft have I beheld
> Thee mounted on thy fierce and trampling steed,
> Shining in armour bright before the tilt;
> And with thy mistress' sleeve tied on thy helm,
> And charge thy staff to please thy lady's eye,
> That bowed the head-piece of thy friendly foe!
> How oft in arms on horse to bend the mace,
> How oft in arms on foot to break the sword,
> Which never now these eyes may see again!'

There seems a reference to Chaucer in the wording of the following lines—

> 'Then saw I how he smiled with slaying knife
> Wrapp'd under cloke, then saw I deep deceit
> Lurk in his face, and death prepared for me.'[1]

Sir Philip Sidney says of this tragedy: 'Gorboduc is full of stately speeches, and well sounding phrases, climbing to the height of

[1] 'The smiler with the knife under his cloke.'
Knight's Tale.

Seneca his style, and as full of notable morality; which it doth most delightfully teach, and thereby obtain the very end of poetry.' And Mr. Pope, whose taste in such matters was very different from Sir Philip Sidney's, says in still stronger terms: 'That the writers of the succeeding age might have improved as much in other respects, by copying from him a propriety in the sentiments, an unaffected perspicuity of style, and an easy flow in the numbers. In a word, that chastity, correctness, and gravity of style, which are so essential to tragedy, and which all the tragic poets who followed, not excepting Shakespear himself, either little understood, or perpetually neglected.' It was well for us and them that they did so!

The Induction to the Mirrour for Magistrates does his Muse more credit. It sometimes reminds one of Chaucer, and at others seems like an anticipation, in some degree, both of the measure and manner of Spenser. The following stanzas may give the reader an idea of the merit of this old poem, which was published in 1563.

'By him lay heauie Sleepe cosin of Death
Flat on the ground, and still as any stone,
A very corps, saue yeelding forth a breath.
Small keepe tooke he whom Fortune frowned on,
Or whom she lifted vp into the throne
  Of high renowne, but as a liuing death,
  So dead aliue, of life he drew the breath.

The bodies rest, the quiet of the hart,
The trauailes ease, the still nights feere was he.
And of our life in earth the better part,
Reuer of sight, and yet in whom we see
Things oft that tide, and oft that neuer bee.
  Without respect esteeming equally
  King *Crœsus* pompe, and *Irus* pouertie.

And next in order sad Old Age we found,
His beard all hoare, his eyes hollow and blind,
With drouping cheere still poring on the ground,
As on the place where nature him assign'd
To rest, when that the sisters had vntwin'd
  His vitall thred, and ended with their knife
  The fleeting course of fast declining life.

There heard we him with broke and hollow plaint
Rew with himselfe his end approaching fast,
And all for naught his wretched mind torment,
With sweete remembrance of his pleasures past,
And fresh delites of lustic youth forewast.
  Recounting which, how would he sob nad shreek?
  And to be yong again of *Ioue* beseeke.

But and the cruell fates so fixed be,
That time forepast cannot returne againe,
This one request of *Ioue* yet prayed he:
That in such withred plight, and wretched paine,
As *eld* (accompanied with lothsome traine)
  Had brought on him, all were it woe and griefe,
  He might a while yet linger forth his life,

And not so soone descend into the pit:
Where Death, when he the mortall corps hath slaine,
With wretchlesse hand in graue doth couer it,
Thereafter neuer to enioy againe
The gladsome light, but in the ground ylaine,
  In depth of darknesse waste and weare to nought,
  As he had nere into the world been brought.

But who had seene him, sobbing how he stood
Vnto himselfe, and how he would bemone
His youth forepast, as though it wrought him good
To talke of youth, all were his youth foregone,
He would haue musde and maruail'd much whereon
  This wretched Age should life desire so faine,
  And knowes ful wel life doth but length his paine.

Crookebackt he was, toothshaken, and blere eyde,
Went on three feete, and sometime crept on foure,
With old lame bones, that ratled by his side,
His scalpe all pil'd, and he with eld forelore:
His withred fist still knocking at Deaths dore,
  Fumbling and driueling as he drawes his breath,
  For briefe, the shape and messenger of Death.'

John Lyly (born in the Weold of Kent about the year 1553), was the author of Midas and Endymion, of Alexander and Campaspe, and of the comedy of Mother Bombie. Of the last it may be said, that it is very much what its name would import, old, quaint, and vulgar.—I may here observe, once for all, that I would not be understood to say, that the age of Elizabeth was all of gold without any alloy. There was both gold and lead in it, and often in one and the same writer. In our impatience to form an opinion, we conclude, when we first meet with a good thing, that it is owing to the age; or, if we meet with a bad one, it is characteristic of the age, when, in fact, it is neither; for there are good and bad in almost all ages, and one age excels in one thing, another in another:—only one age may excel more and in higher things than another, but none can excel equally and completely in all. The writers of Elizabeth, as poets, soared to the height they did, by indulging their own unrestrained enthusiasm: as comic writers, they chiefly copied the manners of the

age, which did not give them the same advantage over their successors. Lyly's comedy, for instance, is 'poor, unfledged, has never winged from view o' th' nest,' and tries in vain to rise above the ground with crude conceits and clumsy levity. Lydia, the heroine of the piece, is silly enough, if the rest were but as witty. But the author has shewn no partiality in the distribution of his gifts. To say truth, it was a very common fault of the old comedy, that its humours were too low, and the weaknesses exposed too great to be credible, or an object of ridicule, even if they were. The affectation of their courtiers is passable, and diverting as a contrast to present manners; but the eccentricities of their clowns are 'very tolerable, and not to be endured.' Any kind of activity of mind might seem to the writers better than none: any nonsense served to amuse their hearers; any cant phrase, any coarse allusion, any pompous absurdity, was taken for wit and drollery. Nothing could be too mean, too foolish, too improbable, or too offensive, to be a proper subject for laughter. Any one (looking hastily at this side of the question only) might be tempted to suppose the youngest children of Thespis a very callow brood, chirping their slender notes, or silly swains 'grating their lean and flashy jests on scrannel pipes of wretched straw.' The genius of comedy looked too often like a lean and hectic pantaloon; love was a slip-shod shepherdess; wit a parti-coloured fool like Harlequin, and the plot came hobbling, like a clown, after all. A string of impertinent and farcical jests (or rather blunders), was with great formality ushered into the world as 'a right pleasant and conceited comedy.' Comedy could not descend lower than it sometimes did, without glancing at physical imperfections and deformity. The two young persons in the play before us, on whom the event of the plot chiefly hinges, do in fact turn out to be no better than changelings and natural idiots. This is carrying innocence and simplicity too far. So again, the character of Sir Tophas in Endymion, an affected, blustering, talkative, cowardly pretender, treads too near upon blank stupidity and downright want of common sense, to be admissible as a butt for satire. Shakespear has contrived to clothe the lamentable nakedness of the same sort of character with a motley garb from the wardrobe of his imagination, and has redeemed it from insipidity by a certain plausibility of speech, and playful extravagance of humour. But the undertaking was nearly desperate. Ben Jonson tried to overcome the difficulty by the force of learning and study: and thought to gain his end by persisting in error; but he only made matters worse; for his clowns and coxcombs (if we except Bobadil), are the most incorrigible and insufferable of all others.—The story of Mother Bombie is little else than a tissue of absurd mistakes, arising from the confusion of the

different characters one with another, like another Comedy of Errors, and ends in their being (most of them), married in a game at cross-purposes to the persons they particularly dislike.

To leave this, and proceed to something pleasanter, Midas and Endymion, which are worthy of their names and of the subject. The story in both is classical, and the execution is for the most part elegant and simple. There is often something that reminds one of the graceful communicativeness of Lucian or of Apuleius, from whom one of the stories is borrowed. Lyly made a more attractive picture of Grecian manners at second-hand, than of English characters from his own observation. The poet (which is the great merit of a poet in such a subject) has transported himself to the scene of action, to ancient Greece or Asia Minor; the manners, the images, the traditions are preserved with truth and delicacy, and the dialogue (to my fancy) glides and sparkles like a clear stream from the Muses' spring. I know few things more perfect in characteristic painting, than the exclamation of the Phrygian shepherds, who, afraid of betraying the secret of Midas's ears, fancy that 'the very reeds bow down, as though they listened to their talk'; nor more affecting in sentiment, than the apostrophe addressed by his friend Eumenides to Endymion, on waking from his long sleep, 'Behold the twig to which thou laidest down thy head, is now become a tree.' The narrative is sometimes a little wandering and desultory; but if it had been ten times as tedious, this thought would have redeemed it; for I cannot conceive of any thing more beautiful, more simple or touching, than this exquisitely chosen image and dumb proof of the manner in which he had passed his life, from youth to old age, in a dream, a dream of love. Happy Endymion! Faithful Eumenides! Divine Cynthia! Who would not wish to pass his life in such a sleep, a long, long sleep, dreaming of some fair heavenly Goddess, with the moon shining upon his face, and the trees growing silently over his head!—There is something in this story which has taken a strange hold of my fancy, perhaps 'out of my weakness and my melancholy'; but for the satisfaction of the reader, I will quote the whole passage: 'it is silly sooth, and dallies with the innocence of love, like the old age.'

'*Cynthia.* Well, let us to Endymion. I will not be so stately (good Endymion) not to stoop to do thee good; and if thy liberty consist in a kiss from me, thou shalt have it. And although my mouth hath been heretofore as untouched as my thoughts, yet now to recover thy life (though to restore thy youth it be impossible) I will do that to Endymion, which yet never mortal man could boast of heretofore, nor shall ever hope for hereafter. (*She kisses him*).

Eumenides. Madam, he beginneth to stir.

Cynthia. Soft, Eumenides, stand still.

Eumenides. Ah ! I see his eyes almost open.

Cynthia. I command thee once again, stir not: I will stand behind him.

Panelion. What do I see ? Endymion almost awake ?

Eumenides. Endymion, Endymion, art thou deaf or dumb ? Or hath this long sleep taken away thy memory ? Ah ! my sweet Endymion, seest thou not Eumenides, thy faithful friend, thy faithful Eumenides, who for thy sake hath been careless of his own content ? Speak, Endymion ! Endymion ! Endymion !

Endymion. Endymion ! I call to mind such a name.

Eumenides. Hast thou forgotten thyself, Endymion ? Then do I not marvel thou rememberest not thy friend. I tell thee thou art Endymion, and I Eumenides. Behold also Cynthia, by whose favour thou art awaked, and by whose virtue thou shalt continue thy natural course.

Cynthia. Endymion ! Speak, sweet Endymion ! Knowest thou not Cynthia ?

Endymion. Oh, heavens ! whom do I behold ? Fair Cynthia, divine Cynthia ?

Cynthia. I am Cynthia, and thou Endymion.

Endymion. Endymion ! What do I hear ? What ! a grey beard, hollow eyes, withered body, and decayed limbs, and all in one night ?

Eumenides. One night ! Thou hast slept here forty years, by what enchantress, as yet it is not known: and behold the twig to which thou laidest thy head, is now become a tree. Callest thou not Eumenides to remembrance ?

Endymion. Thy name I do remember by the sound, but thy favour I do not yet call to mind: only divine Cynthia, to whom time, fortune, death, and destiny are subject, I see and remember; and in all humility, I regard and reverence.

Cynthia. You shall have good cause to remember Eumenides, who hath for thy safety forsaken his own solace.

Endymion. Am I that Endymion, who was wont in court to lead my life, and in justs, tourneys, and arms, to exercise my youth ? Am I that Endymion ?

Eumenides. Thou art that Endymion, and I Eumenides: wilt thou not yet call me to remembrance ?

Endymion. Ah ! sweet Eumenides, I now perceive thou art he, and that myself have the name of Endymion; but that this should be my body, I doubt: for how could my curled locks be turned to gray hair, and my strong body to a dying weakness, having waxed old, and not knowing it ?

Cynthia. Well, Endymion, arise: awhile sit down, for that thy limbs are stiff and not able to stay thee, and tell what thou hast seen in thy sleep all this while. What dreams, visions, thoughts, and fortunes: for it is impossible but in so long time, thou shouldst see strange things.'

Act V. Scene 1.

It does not take away from the pathos of this poetical allegory on the chances of love and the progress of human life, that it may be

supposed to glance indirectly at the conduct of Queen Elizabeth to our author, who, after fourteen years' expectation of the place of Master of the Revels, was at last disappointed. This princess took no small delight in keeping her poets in a sort of Fool's Paradise. The wit of Lyly, in parts of this romantic drama, seems to have grown spirited and classical with his subject. He puts this fine hyperbolical irony in praise of Dipsas, (a most unamiable personage, as it will appear), into the mouth of Sir Tophas:

'Oh what fine thin hair hath Dipsas! What a pretty low forehead! What a tall and stately nose! What little hollow eyes! What great and goodly lips! How harmless she is, being toothless! Her fingers fat and short, adorned with long nails like a bittern! What a low stature she is, and yet what a great foot she carrieth! How thrifty must she be, in whom there is no waist; how virtuous she is like to be, over whom no man can be jealous!' *Act III. Scene* 3.

It is singular that the style of this author, which is extremely sweet and flowing, should have been the butt of ridicule to his contemporaries, particularly Drayton, who compliments Sidney as the author that

'Did first reduce
Our tongue from Lyly's writing, then in use;
Talking of stones, stars, plants, of fishes, flies,
Playing with words and idle similes,
As the English apes and very zanies be
Of every thing that they do hear and see.'

Which must apply to the prose style of his work, called '*Euphues and his England*,' and is much more like Sir Philip Sidney's own manner, than the dramatic style of our poet. Besides the passages above quoted, I might refer to the opening speeches of Midas, and again to the admirable contention between Pan and Apollo for the palm of music.—His Alexander and Campaspe is another sufficient answer to the charge. This play is a very pleasing transcript of old manners and sentiment. It is full of sweetness and point, of Attic salt and the honey of Hymettus. The following song given to Apelles, would not disgrace the mouth of the prince of painters:

'Cupid and my Campaspe play'd
At cards for kisses, Cupid paid;
He stakes his quiver, bow, and arrows;
His mother's doves, and team of sparrows;
Loses them too, then down he throws
The coral of his lip, the rose
Growing on's cheek (but none knows how)
With these the chrystal of his brow,

And then the dimple of his chin;
All these did my Campaspe win.
At last he set her both his eyes,
She won, and Cupid blind did rise.
O, Love! has she done this to thee?
What shall, alas! become of me?'

The conclusion of this drama is as follows. Alexander addressing himself to Apelles, says,

'Well, enjoy one another: I give her thee frankly, Apelles. Thou shalt see that Alexander maketh but a toy of love, and leadeth affection in fetters: using fancy as a fool to make him sport, or a minstrel to make him merry. It is not the amorous glance of an eye can settle an idle thought in the heart: no, no, it is children's game, a life for sempsters and scholars; the one, pricking in clouts, have nothing else to think on; the other, picking fancies out of books, have little else to marvel at. Go, Apelles, take with you your Campaspe; Alexander is cloyed with looking on that, which thou wonderest at.

Apelles. Thanks to your Majesty on bended knee; you have honoured Apelles.

Campaspe. Thanks with bowed heart; you have blest Campaspe. [*Exeunt.*

Alexander. Page, go warn Clytus and Parmenio, and the other lords, to be in readiness; let the trumpet sound, strike up the drum, and I will presently into Persia. How now, Hephestion, is Alexander able to resist love as he list?

Hephestion. The conquering of Thebes was not so honourable as the subduing of these thoughts.

Alexander. It were a shame Alexander should desire to command the world, if he could not command himself. But come, let us go. And, good Hephestion, when all the world is won, and every country is thine and mine, either find me out another to subdue, or on my word, I will fall in love.'

Marlowe is a name that stands high, and almost first in this list of dramatic worthies. He was a little before Shakespear's time,[1] and has a marked character both from him and the rest. There is a lust of power in his writings, a hunger and thirst after unrighteousness, a glow of the imagination, unhallowed by any thing but its own energies. His thoughts burn within him like a furnace with bickering flames; or throwing out black smoke and mists, that hide the dawn of genius, or like a poisonous mineral, corrode the heart. His Life and Death of Doctor Faustus, though an imperfect and unequal performance, is his greatest work. Faustus himself is a rude sketch, but it is a gigantic one. This character may be considered as a personification of the pride of will and eagerness of curiosity, sublimed

[1] He died about 1594.

beyond the reach of fear and remorse. He is hurried away, and, as it were, devoured by a tormenting desire to enlarge his knowledge to the utmost bounds of nature and art, and to extend his power with his knowledge. He would realise all the fictions of a lawless imagination, would solve the most subtle speculations of abstract reason; and for this purpose, sets at defiance all mortal consequences, and leagues himself with demoniacal power, with 'fate and metaphysical aid.' The idea of witchcraft and necromancy, once the dread of the vulgar and the darling of the visionary recluse, seems to have had its origin in the restless tendency of the human mind, to conceive of and aspire to more than it can atchieve by natural means, and in the obscure apprehension that the gratification of this extravagant and unauthorised desire, can only be attained by the sacrifice of all our ordinary hopes, and better prospects to the infernal agents that lend themselves to its accomplishment. Such is the foundation of the present story. Faustus, in his impatience to fulfil at once and for a moment, for a few short years, all the desires and conceptions of his soul, is willing to give in exchange his soul and body to the great enemy of mankind. Whatever he fancies, becomes by this means present to his sense: whatever he commands, is done. He calls back time past, and anticipates the future: the visions of antiquity pass before him, Babylon in all its glory, Paris and Œnone: all the projects of philosophers, or creations of the poet pay tribute at his feet: all the delights of fortune, of ambition, of pleasure, and of learning are centered in his person; and from a short-lived dream of supreme felicity and drunken power, he sinks into an abyss of darkness and perdition. This is the alternative to which he submits; the bond which he signs with his blood! As the outline of the character is grand and daring, the execution is abrupt and fearful. The thoughts are vast and irregular; and the style halts and staggers under them, 'with uneasy steps';—'such footing found the sole of unblest feet.' There is a little fustian and incongruity of metaphor now and then, which is not very injurious to the subject. It is time to give a few passages in illustration of this account. He thus opens his mind at the beginning:

'How am I glutted with conceit of this?
Shall I make spirits fetch me what I please?
Resolve me of all ambiguities?
Perform what desperate enterprise I will?
I'll have them fly to India for gold,
Ransack the ocean for orient pearl,
And search all corners of the new-found world,
For pleasant fruits and princely delicates.

I 'll have them read me strange philosophy,
And tell the secrets of all foreign kings:
I 'll have them wall all Germany with brass,
And make swift Rhine circle fair Wittenberg;
I 'll have them fill the public schools with silk,
Wherewith the students shall be bravely clad;
I 'll levy soldiers with the coin they bring,
And chase the Prince of Parma from our land,
And reign sole king of all the provinces:
Yea, stranger engines for the brunt of war
Than was the fiery keel at Antwerp bridge,
I 'll make my servile spirits to invent.

Enter Valdes *and* Cornelius.

Come, German Valdes, and Cornelius,
And make me blest with your sage conference.
Valdes, sweet Valdes, and Cornelius,
Know that your words have won me at the last,
To practice magic and concealed arts.
Philosophy is odious and obscure;
Both Law and Physic are for petty wits;
'Tis magic, magic, that hath ravish'd me.
Then, gentle friends, aid me in this attempt;
And I, that have with subtile syllogisms
Gravell'd the pastors of the German church,
And made the flow'ring pride of Wittenberg
Swarm to my problems, as th' infernal spirits
On sweet Musæus when he came to hell;
Will be as cunning as Agrippa was,
Whose shadow made all Europe honour him.
Valdes. These books, thy wit, and our experience
Shall make all nations to canonize us.
As Indian Moors obey their Spanish lords,
So shall the Spirits of every element
Be always serviceable to us three.
Like lions shall they guard us when we please;
Like Almain Rutters with their horsemen's staves,
Or Lapland giants trotting by our sides:
Sometimes like women, or unwedded maids,
Shadowing more beauty in their airy brows
Than have the white breasts of the Queen of Love.
From Venice they shall drag whole argosies,
And from America the golden fleece,
That yearly stuffs old Philip's treasury;[1]
If learned Faustus will be resolute.
Faustus. As resolute am I in this
As thou to live, therefore object it not.'

[1] An anachronism.

In his colloquy with the fallen angel, he shews the fixedness of his determination :—

'What is great Mephostophilis so passionate
For being deprived of the joys of heaven ?
Learn thou of Faustus manly fortitude,
And scorn those joys thou never shalt possess.'

Yet we afterwards find him faltering in his resolution, and struggling with the extremity of his fate.

'My heart is harden'd, I cannot repent:
Scarce can I name salvation, faith, or heaven:
Swords, poisons, halters, and envenom'd steel
Are laid before me to dispatch myself;
And long ere this I should have done the deed,
Had not sweet pleasure conquer'd deep despair.
Have I not made blind Homer sing to me
Of Alexander's love and Œnon's death ?
And hath not he that built the walls of Thebes
With ravishing sounds of his melodious harp,
Made music with my Mephostophilis ?
Why should I die then or basely despair ?
I am resolv'd, Faustus shall not repent.
Come, Mephostophilis, let us dispute again,
And reason of divine astrology.'

There is one passage more of this kind, which is so striking and beautiful, so like a rapturous and deeply passionate dream, that I cannot help quoting it here: it is the Address to the Apparition of Helen.

'*Enter* Helen *again, passing over between two Cupids.*

Faustus. Was this the face that launch'd a thousand ships,
And burned the topless tow'rs of Ilium ?
Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss.
Her lips suck forth my soul ! See where it flies.
Come, Helen, come, give me my soul again.
Here will I dwell, for Heav'n is in these lips,
And all is dross that is not Helena.
I will be Paris, and for love of thee,
Instead of Troy shall Wittenberg be sack'd ;
And I will combat with weak Menelaus,
And wear thy colours on my plumed crest;
Yea, I will wound Achilles in the heel,
And then return to Helen for a kiss.
—Oh ! thou art fairer than the evening air,
Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars:
Brighter art thou than flaming Jupiter,

When he appear'd to hapless Semele;
More lovely than the monarch of the sky
In wanton Arethusa's azure arms;
And none but thou shalt be my paramour.'

The ending of the play is terrible, and his last exclamations betray an anguish of mind and vehemence of passion, not to be contemplated without shuddering.

—'Oh, Faustus!
Now hast thou but one bare hour to live,
And then thou must be damn'd perpetually.
Stand still, you ever-moving spheres of heav'n,
That time may cease, and midnight never come.
Fair nature's eye, rise, rise again, and make
Perpetual day; or let this hour be but a year,
A month, a week, a natural day,
That Faustus may repent, and save his soul.

(*The Clock strikes Twelve.*)

It strikes, it strikes! Now, body, turn to air,
Or Lucifer will bear thee quick to hell.
Oh soul! be chang'd into small water-drops,
And fall into the ocean; ne'er be found.

(*Thunder. Enter the* Devils.)

Oh! mercy, Heav'n! Look not so fierce on me!
Adders and serpents, let me breathe awhile!—
Ugly hell, gape not! Come not, Lucifer!
I'll burn my books! Oh! Mephostophilis.'

Perhaps the finest *trait* in the whole play, and that which softens and subdues the horror of it, is the interest taken by the two scholars in the fate of their master, and their unavailing attempts to dissuade him from his relentless career. The regard to learning is the ruling passion of this drama; and its indications are as mild and amiable in them as its ungoverned pursuit has been fatal to Faustus.

'Yet, for he was a scholar once admir'd
For wondrous knowledge in our German schools,
We'll give his mangled limbs due burial;
And all the students, clothed in mourning black,
Shall wait upon his heavy funeral.'

So the Chorus:

'Cut is the branch that might have grown full strait,
And burned is Apollo's laurel bough,
That sometime grew within this learned man.'

And still more affecting are his own conflicts of mind and agonising doubts on this subject just before, when he exclaims to his friends; 'Oh, gentlemen! Hear me with patience, and tremble not at my speeches. Though my heart pant and quiver to remember that I have been a student here these thirty years; oh! would I had never seen Wittenberg, never read book!' A finer compliment was never paid, nor a finer lesson ever read to the pride of learning.—The intermediate comic parts, in which Faustus is not directly concerned, are mean and grovelling to the last degree. One of the Clowns says to another: 'Snails! what hast got there? A book? Why thou can'st not tell ne'er a word on 't.' Indeed, the ignorance and barbarism of the time, as here described, might almost justify Faustus's overstrained admiration of learning, and turn the heads of those who possessed it, from novelty and unaccustomed excitement, as the Indians are made drunk with wine! Goethe, the German poet, has written a drama on this tradition of his country, which is considered a master-piece. I cannot find, in Marlowe's play, any proofs of the atheism or impiety attributed to him, unless the belief in witchcraft and the Devil can be regarded as such; and at the time he wrote, not to have believed in both, would have been construed into the rankest atheism and irreligion. There is a delight, as Mr. Lamb says, 'in dallying with interdicted subjects'; but that does not, by any means, imply either a practical or speculative disbelief of them.

Lust's Dominion; *or*, the Lascivious Queen, is referable to the same general style of writing; and is a striking picture, or rather caricature, of the unrestrained love of power, not as connected with learning, but with regal ambition and external sway. There is a good deal of the same intense passion, the same recklessness of purpose, the same smouldering fire within: but there is not any of the same relief to the mind in the lofty imaginative nature of the subject; and the continual repetition of plain practical villainy and undigested horrors disgusts the sense, and blunts the interest. The mind is hardened into obduracy, not melted into sympathy, by such bare-faced and barbarous cruelty. Eleazar, the Moor, is such another character as Aaron in Titus Andronicus, and this play might be set down without injustice as 'pue-fellow' to that. I should think Marlowe has a much fairer claim to be the author of Titus Andronicus than Shakespear, at least from internal evidence; and the argument of Schlegel, that it must have been Shakespear's, because there was no one else capable of producing either its faults or beauties, fails in each particular. The Queen is the same character in both these plays; and the business of the plot is carried on in much the same revolting manner, by making the nearest friends and relatives of the wretched

victims the instruments of their sufferings and persecution by an arch-villain. To shew however, that the same strong-braced tone of passionate declamation is kept up, take the speech of Eleazar on refusing the proffered crown:

> 'What do none rise?
> No, no, for kings indeed are Deities.
> And who'd not (as the sun) in brightness shine?
> To be the greatest is to be divine.
> Who among millions would not be the mightiest?
> To sit in godlike state; to have all eyes
> Dazzled with admiration, and all tongues
> Shouting loud prayers; to rob every heart
> Of love; to have the strength of every arm;
> A sovereign's name, why 'tis a sovereign charm.
> This glory round about me hath thrown beams:
> I have stood upon the top of Fortune's wheel,
> And backward turn'd the iron screw of fate.
> The destinies have spun a silken thread
> About my life; yet thus I cast aside
> The shape of majesty, and on my knee
> To this Imperial state lowly resign
> This usurpation; wiping off your fears
> Which stuck so hard upon me.'

This is enough to shew the unabated vigour of the author's style. This strain is certainly doing justice to the pride of ambition, and the imputed majesty of kings.

We have heard much of 'Marlowe's mighty line,' and this play furnishes frequent instances of it. There are a number of single lines that seem struck out in the heat of a glowing fancy, and leave a track of golden fire behind them. The following are a few that might be given.

> 'I know he is not dead; I know proud death
> Durst not behold such sacred majesty.'

* * * * *

> 'Hang both your greedy ears upon my lips,
> Let them devour my speech, suck in my breath.'

* * * * *

> ——'From discontent grows treason,
> And on the stalk of treason, death.'

* * * * *

> 'Tyrants swim safest in a crimson flood.'

* * * * *

The two following lines—

> 'Oh! I grow dull, and the cold hand of sleep
> Hath thrust his icy fingers in my breast'—

are the same as those in King John—

> 'And none of you will bid the winter come
> To thrust his icy fingers in my maw.'

and again the Moor's exclamation,

> 'Now by the proud complexion of my cheeks,
> Ta'en from the kisses of the amorous sun'—

is the same as Cleopatra's—

> 'But I that am with Phœbus' amorous pinches black'—&c.

Eleazar's sarcasm,

> ——'These dignities,
> Like poison, make men swell; this rat's-bane honour,
> Oh, 'tis so sweet! they'll lick it till they burst'—

shews the utmost virulence of smothered spleen; and his concluding strain of malignant exultation has been but tamely imitated by Young's Zanga.

> 'Now tragedy, thou minion of the night,
> Rhamnusia's pewfellow,[1] to thee I'll sing,
> Upon a harp made of dead Spanish bones,
> The proudest instrument the world affords:
> To thee that never blushest, though thy cheeks
> Are full of blood, O Saint Revenge, to thee
> I consecrate my murders, all my stabs,' &c.

It may be worth while to observe, for the sake of the curious, that many of Marlowe's most sounding lines consist of monosyllables, or nearly so. The repetition of Eleazar's taunt to the Cardinal, retorting his own words upon him, 'Spaniard or Moor, the saucy slave shall die'—may perhaps have suggested Falconbridge's spirited reiteration of the phrase—'And hang a calve's skin on his recreant limbs.'

I do not think THE RICH JEW OF MALTA so characteristic a specimen of this writer's powers. It has not the same fierce glow of passion or expression. It is extreme in act, and outrageous in plot and catastrophe; but it has not the same vigorous filling up. The author seems to have relied on the horror inspired by the subject, and the national disgust excited against the principal character, to rouse the feelings of the audience: for the rest, it is a tissue of gratuitous, unprovoked, and incredible atrocities, which are committed, one upon

[1] This expression seems to be ridiculed by Falstaff.

the back of the other, by the parties concerned, without motive, passion, or object. There are, notwithstanding, some striking passages in it, as Barabbas's description of the bravo, Philia Borzo [1]; the relation of his own unaccountable villainies to Ithamore; his rejoicing over his recovered jewels 'as the morning lark sings over her young;' and the backwardness he declares in himself to forgive the Christian injuries that are offered him,[2] which may have given the idea of one of Shylock's speeches, where he ironically disclaims any enmity to the merchants on the same account. It is perhaps hardly fair to compare the Jew of Malta with the Merchant of Venice; for it is evident, that Shakespear's genius shews to as much advantage in knowledge of character, in variety and stage-effect, as it does in point of general humanity.

[1] 'He sent a shaggy, tattered, staring slave,
That when he speaks, draws out his grisly beard,
And winds it twice or thrice about his ear;
Whose face has been a grind-stone for men's swords:
His hands are hack'd, some fingers cut quite off,
Who when he speaks, grunts like a hog, and looks
Like one that is employ'd in catzerie,
And cross-biting; such a rogue
As is the husband to a hundred whores;
And I by him must send three hundred crowns.'

Act IV.

[2] 'In spite of these swine-eating Christians
(Unchosen nation, never circumcised;
Such poor villains as were ne'er thought upon,
Till Titus and Vespasian conquer'd us)
Am I become as wealthy as I was.
They hoped my daughter would have been a nun;
But she's at home, and I have bought a house
As great and fair as is the Governor's:
And there, in spite of Malta, will I dwell,
Having Ferneze's hand; whose heart I'll have,
Aye, and his son's too, or it shall go hard.

I am not of the tribe of Levi, I,
That can so soon forget an injury.
We Jews can fawn like spaniels when we please;
And when we grin we bite; yet are our looks
As innocent and harmless as a lamb's.
I learn'd in Florence how to kiss my hand,
Heave up my shoulders when they call me dog,
And duck as low as any bare-foot Friar:
Hoping to see them starve upon a stall,
Or else be gather'd for in our synagogue,
That when the offering bason comes to me,
Even for charity I may spit into it.'

Edward II. is, according to the modern standard of composition, Marlowe's best play. It is written with few offences against the common rules, and in a succession of smooth and flowing lines. The poet however succeeds less in the voluptuous and effeminate descriptions which he here attempts, than in the more dreadful and violent bursts of passion. Edward II. is drawn with historic truth, but without much dramatic effect. The management of the plot is feeble and desultory; little interest is excited in the various turns of fate; the characters are too worthless, have too little energy, and their punishment is, in general, too well deserved, to excite our commiseration; so that this play will bear, on the whole, but a distant comparison with Shakespear's Richard II. in conduct, power, or effect. But the death of Edward II. in Marlow's tragedy, is certainly superior to that of Shakespear's King; and in heart-breaking distress, and the sense of human weakness, claiming pity from utter helplessness and conscious misery, is not surpassed by any writer whatever.

> '*Edward.* Weep'st thou already? List awhile to me,
> And then thy heart, were it as Gurney's is,
> Or as Matrevis, hewn from the Caucasus,
> Yet will it melt ere I have done my tale.
> This dungeon, where they keep me, is the sink
> Wherein the filth of all the castle falls.
> *Lightborn.* Oh villains.
> *Edward.* And here in mire and puddle have I stood
> This ten days' space; and lest that I should sleep,
> One plays continually upon a drum.
> They give me bread and water, being a king;
> So that, for want of sleep and sustenance,
> My mind 's distempered, and my body 's numbed:
> And whether I have limbs or no, I know not.
> Oh! would my blood drop out from every vein,
> As doth this water from my tatter'd robes!
> Tell Isabel, the Queen, I look'd not thus,
> When for her sake I ran at tilt in France,
> And there unhors'd the Duke of Cleremont.'

There are some excellent passages scattered up and down. The description of the King and Gaveston looking out of the palace window, and laughing at the courtiers as they pass, and that of the different spirit shewn by the lion and the forest deer, when wounded, are among the best. The Song 'Come, live with me and be my love,' to which Sir Walter Raleigh wrote an answer, is Marlowe's.

Heywood I shall mention next, as a direct contrast to Marlowe in everything but the smoothness of his verse. As Marlowe's imagination glows like a furnace, Heywood's is a gentle, lambent flame that

purifies without consuming. His manner is simplicity itself. There is nothing supernatural, nothing startling, or terrific. He makes use of the commonest circumstances of every-day life, and of the easiest tempers, to shew the workings, or rather the inefficacy of the passions, the *vis inertiæ* of tragedy. His incidents strike from their very familiarity, and the distresses he paints invite our sympathy, from the calmness and resignation with which they are borne. The pathos might be deemed purer from its having no mixture of turbulence or vindictiveness in it; and in proportion as the sufferers are made to deserve a better fate. In the midst of the most untoward reverses and cutting injuries, good-nature and good sense keep their accustomed sway. He describes men's errors with tenderness, and their duties only with zeal, and the heightenings of a poetic fancy. His style is equally natural, simple, and unconstrained. The dialogue (bating the verse), is such as might be uttered in ordinary conversation. It is beautiful prose put into heroic measure. It is not so much that he uses the common English idiom for everything (for that I think the most poetical and impassioned of our elder dramatists do equally), but the simplicity of the characters, and the equable flow of the sentiments do not require or suffer it to be warped from the tone of level speaking, by figurative expressions, or hyperbolical allusions. A few scattered exceptions occur now and then, where the hectic flush of passion forces them from the lips, and they are not the worse for being rare. Thus, in the play called A WOMAN KILLED WITH KINDNESS, Wendoll, when reproached by Mrs. Frankford with his obligations to her husband, interrupts her hastily, by saying

——'Oh speak no more!
For more than this I know, and have recorded
Within the *red-leaved table* of my heart.'

And further on, Frankford, when doubting his wife's fidelity, says, with less feeling indeed, but with much elegance of fancy,

'Cold drops of sweat sit dangling on my hairs,
Like morning dew upon the golden flow'rs.'

So also, when returning to his house at midnight to make the fatal discovery, he exclaims,

——'Astonishment,
Fear, and amazement beat upon my heart,
Even as a madman beats upon a drum.'

It is the reality of things present to their imaginations, that makes these writers so fine, so bold, and yet so true in what they describe.

Nature lies open to them like a book, and was not to them 'invisible, or dimly seen' through a veil of words and filmy abstractions. Such poetical ornaments are however to be met with at considerable intervals in this play, and do not disturb the calm serenity and domestic simplicity of the author's style. The conclusion of Wendoll's declaration of love to Mrs. Frankford may serve as an illustration of its general merits, both as to thought and diction.

'Fair, and of all beloved, I was not fearful
Bluntly to give my life into your hand,
And at one hazard, all my earthly means.
Go, tell your husband: he will turn me off,
And I am then undone. I care not, I;
'Twas for your sake. Perchance in rage he'll kill me;
I care not; 'twas for you. Say I incur
The general name of villain thro' the world,
Of traitor to my friend: I care not, I;
Poverty, shame, death, scandal, and reproach,
For you I'll hazard all: why what care I?
For you I love, and for your love I'll die.'

The affecting remonstrance of Frankford to his wife, and her repentant agony at parting with him, are already before the public, in Mr. Lamb's Specimens. The winding up of this play is rather awkwardly managed, and the moral is, according to established usage, equivocal. It required only Frankford's reconciliation to his wife, as well as his forgiveness of her, for the highest breach of matrimonial duty, to have made a Woman Killed with Kindness a complete anticipation of the Stranger. Heywood, however, was in that respect but half a Kotzebue!—The view here given of country manners is truly edifying. As in the higher walk of tragedy we see the manners and moral sentiments of kings and nobles of former times, here we have the feuds and amiable qualities of country 'squires and their relatives; and such as were the rulers, such were their subjects. The frequent quarrels and ferocious habits of private life are well exposed in the fatal rencounter between Sir Francis Acton and Sir Charles Mountford about a hawking match, in the ruin and rancorous persecution of the latter in consequence, and in the hard, unfeeling, cold-blooded treatment he receives in his distress from his own relations, and from a fellow of the name of Shafton. After reading the sketch of this last character, who is introduced as a mere ordinary personage, the representative of a class, without any preface or apology, no one can doubt the credibility of that of Sir Giles Over-reach, who is professedly held up (I should think almost unjustly) as a prodigy of grasping and hardened selfishness. The influence of philosophy

and prevalence of abstract reasoning, if it has done nothing for our poetry, has done, I should hope, something for our manners. The callous declaration of one of these unconscionable churls,

'This is no world in which to pity men,'

might have been taken as a motto for the good old times in general, and with a very few reservations, if Heywood has not grossly libelled them.—Heywood's plots have little of artifice or regularity of design to recommend them. He writes on carelessly, as it happens, and trusts to Nature, and a certain happy tranquillity of spirit, for gaining the favour of the audience. He is said, besides attending to his duties as an actor, to have composed regularly a sheet a day. This may account in some measure for the unembarrassed facility of his style. His own account makes the number of his writings for the stage, or those in which he had a main hand, upwards of 200. In fact, I do not wonder at any quantity that an author is said to have written; for the more a man writes, the more he can write.

The same remarks will apply, with certain modifications, to other remaining works of this writer, the Royal King and Loyal Subject, a Challenge for Beauty, and the English Traveller. The barb of misfortune is sheathed in the mildness of the writer's temperament, and the story jogs on very comfortably, without effort or resistance, to the *euthanasia* of the catastrophe. In two of these, the person principally aggrieved survives, and feels himself none the worse for it. The most splendid passage in Heywood's comedies is the account of Shipwreck by Drink, in the English Traveller, which was the foundation of Cowley's Latin Poem, *Naufragium Joculare.*

The names of Middleton and Rowley, with which I shall conclude this Lecture, generally appear together as two writers who frequently combined their talents in the production of joint-pieces. Middleton (judging from their separate works) was 'the more potent spirit' of the two; but they were neither of them equal to some others. Rowley appears to have excelled in describing a certain amiable quietness of disposition and disinterested tone of morality, carried almost to a paradoxical excess, as in his Fair Quarrel, and in the comedy of A Woman never Vexed, which is written, in many parts, with a pleasing simplicity and *naiveté* equal to the novelty of the conception. Middleton's style was not marked by any peculiar quality of his own, but was made up, in equal proportions, of the faults and excellences common to his contemporaries. In his Women Beware Women, there is a rich marrowy vein of internal sentiment, with fine occasional insight into human nature, and cool cutting irony of expression. He is lamentably deficient in the plot and denouement

of the story. It is like the rough draught of a tragedy, with a number of fine things thrown in, and the best made use of first; but it tends to no fixed goal, and the interest decreases, instead of increasing, as we read on, for want of previous arrangement and an eye to the whole. We have fine studies of heads, a piece of richly-coloured drapery, 'a foot, an hand, an eye from Nature drawn, that 's worth a history'; but the groups are ill disposed, nor are the figures proportioned to each other or the size of the canvas. The author's power is *in* the subject, not *over* it; or he is in possession of excellent materials, which he husbands very ill. This character, though it applies more particularly to Middleton, might be applied generally to the age. Shakespear alone seemed to stand over his work, and to do what he pleased with it. He saw to the end of what he was about, and with the same faculty of lending himself to the impulses of Nature and the impression of the moment, never forgot that he himself had a task to perform, nor the place which each figure ought to occupy in his general design.—The characters of Livia, of Bianca, of Leantio and his Mother, in the play of which I am speaking, are all admirably drawn. The art and malice of Livia shew equal want of principle and acquaintance with the world; and the scene in which she holds the mother in suspense, while she betrays the daughter into the power of the profligate Duke, is a master-piece of dramatic skill. The proneness of Bianca to tread the primrose path of pleasure, after she has made the first false step, and her sudden transition from unblemished virtue to the most abandoned vice, in which she is notably seconded by her mother-in-law's ready submission to the temptations of wealth and power, form a true and striking picture. The first intimation of the intrigue that follows, is given in a way that is not a little remarkable for simplicity and acuteness. Bianca says,

> 'Did not the Duke look up? Methought he saw us.'

To which the more experienced mother answers,

> 'That 's every one's conceit that sees a Duke.
> If he looks stedfastly, he looks straight at them,
> When he perhaps, good careful gentleman,
> Never minds any, but the look he casts
> Is at his own intentions, and his object
> Only the public good.'

It turns out however, that he had been looking at them, and not 'at the public good.' The moral of this tragedy is rendered more impressive from the manly, independent character of Leantio in the

first instance, and the manner in which he dwells, in a sort of doting abstraction, on his own comforts, in being possessed of a beautiful and faithful wife. As he approaches his own house, and already treads on the brink of perdition, he exclaims with an exuberance of satisfaction not to be restrained—

'How near am I to a happiness
That earth exceeds not! Not another like it:
The treasures of the deep are not so precious,
As are the conceal'd comforts of a man
Lock'd up in woman's love. I scent the air
Of blessings when I come but near the house:
What a delicious breath marriage sends forth!
The violet-bed 's not sweeter. Honest wedlock
Is like a banquetting-house built in a garden,
On which the spring's chaste flowers take delight
To cast their modest odours; when base lust,
With all her powders, paintings, and best pride,
Is but a fair house built by a ditch side.
When I behold a glorious dangerous strumpet,
Sparkling in beauty and destruction too,
Both at a twinkling, I do liken straight
Her beautified body to a goodly temple
That 's built on vaults where carcasses lie rotting;
And so by little and little I shrink back again,
And quench desire with a cool meditation;
And I 'm as well, methinks. Now for a welcome
Able to draw men's envies upon man:
A kiss now that will hang upon my lip,
As sweet as morning dew upon a rose,
And full as long; after a five days' fast
She 'll be so greedy now and cling about me:
I take care how I shall be rid of her;
And here 't begins.'

This dream is dissipated by the entrance of Bianca and his Mother.

'*Bian.* Oh, sir, you 're welcome home.
Moth. Oh, is he come? I am glad on 't.
Lean. (*Aside.*) Is that all?
Why this is dreadful now as sudden death
To some rich man, that flatters all his sins
With promise of repentance when he 's old,
And dies in the midway before he comes to 't.
Sure you 're not well, Bianca! How dost, prithee?
Bian. I have been better than I am at this time.
Lean. Alas, I thought so.
Bian. Nay, I have been worse too,
Than now you see me, sir.

Lean. I 'm glad thou mendst yet,
I feel my heart mend too. How came it to thee?
Has any thing dislik'd thee in my absence?
Bian. No, certain, I have had the best content
That Florence can afford.
Lean. Thou makest the best on 't:
Speak, mother, what 's the cause? you must needs know.
Moth. Troth, I know none, son; let her speak herself;
Unless it be the same gave Lucifer a tumbling cast; that 's pride.
Bian. Methinks this house stands nothing to my mind;
I 'd have some pleasant lodging i' th' high street, sir;
Or if 'twere near the court, sir, that were much better;
'Tis a sweet recreation for a gentlewoman
To stand in a bay-window, and see gallants.
Lean. Now I have another temper, a mere stranger
To that of yours, it seems; I should delight
To see none but yourself.
Bian. I praise not that;
Too fond is as unseemly as too churlish:
I would not have a husband of that proneness,
To kiss me before company, for a world:
Beside, 'tis tedious to see one thing still, sir,
Be it the best that ever heart affected;
Nay, were 't yourself, whose love had power you know
To bring me from my friends, I would not stand thus,
And gaze upon you always; troth, I could not, sir;
As good be blind, and have no use of sight,
As look on one thing still: what 's the eye's treasure,
But change of objects? You are learned, sir,
And know I speak not ill; 'tis full as virtuous
For woman's eye to look on several men,
As for her heart, sir, to be fixed on one.
Lean. Now thou com'st home to me; a kiss for that word.
Bian. No matter for a kiss, sir; let it pass;
'Tis but a toy, we 'll not so much as mind it;
Let 's talk of other business, and forget it.
What news now of the pirates? any stirring?
Prithee discourse a little.
Moth. (*Aside.*) I am glad he 's here yet
To see her tricks himself; I had lied monst'rously
If I had told 'em first.
Lean. Speak, what 's the humour, sweet,
You make your lips so strange? This was not wont.
Bian. Is there no kindness betwixt man and wife,
Unless they make a pigeon-house of friendship,
And be still billing? 'tis the idlest fondness
That ever was invented; and 'tis pity
It 's grown a fashion for poor gentlewomen;
There 's many a disease kiss'd in a year by 't,

And a French court'sy made to't: Alas, sir,
Think of the world, how we shall live, grow serious;
We have been married a whole fortnight now.
Lean. How? a whole fortnight! why, is that so long?
Bian. 'Tis time to leave off dalliance; 'tis a doctrine
Of your own teaching, if you be remember'd,
And I was bound to obey it.
Moth. (*Aside.*) Here's one fits him;
This was well catch'd i' faith, son, like a fellow
That rids another country of a plague,
And brings it home with him to his own house.

[*A Messenger from the Duke knocks within.*

Who knocks?
Lean. Who's there now? Withdraw you, Bianca;
Thou art a gem no stranger's eye must see,
Howe'er thou'rt pleas'd now to look dull on me.

[*Exit Bianca.*'

The Witch of Middleton is his most remarkable performance; both on its own account, and from the use that Shakespear has made of some of the characters and speeches in his Macbeth. Though the employment which Middleton has given to Hecate and the rest, in thwarting the purposes and perplexing the business of familiar and domestic life, is not so grand or appalling as the more stupendous agency which Shakespear has assigned them, yet it is not easy to deny the merit of the first invention to Middleton, who has embodied the existing superstitions of the time, respecting that anomalous class of beings, with a high spirit of poetry, of the most grotesque and fanciful kind. The songs and incantations made use of are very nearly the same. The other parts of this play are not so good; and the solution of the principal difficulty, by Antonio's falling down a trap-door, most lame and impotent. As a specimen of the similarity of the preternatural machinery, I shall here give one entire scene.

'*The Witches' Habitation.*

Enter Heccat, Stadlin, Hoppo, *and other Witches.*

Hec The moon's a gallant: see how brisk she rides.
Stad. Here's a rich evening, Heccat.
Hec. Aye, is't not, wenches,
To take a journey of five thousand miles?
Hop. Our's will be more to-night.
Hec. Oh, 'twill be precious. Heard you the owl yet?
Stad. Briefly, in the copse,
As we came thro' now.
Hec. 'Tis high time for us then.
Stad. There was a bat hung at my lips three times

As we came thro' the woods, and drank her fill:
Old Puckle saw her.
Hec. You are fortunate still,
The very scritch-owl lights upon your shoulder,
And woos you like a pidgeon. Are you furnish'd?
Have you your ointments?
Stad. All.
Hec. Prepare to flight then.
I'll overtake you swiftly.
Stad. Hye then, Heccat!
We shall be up betimes.
Hec. I'll reach you quickly. [*They ascend.*

Enter Firestone.

Fire. They are all going a birding to-night. They talk of fowls i' th' air, that fly by day, I'm sure they'll be a company of foul sluts there to-night. If we have not mortality affeared, I'll be hang'd, for they are able to putrify it, to infect a whole region. She spies me now.

Hec. What, Firestone, our sweet son?

Fire. A little sweeter than some of you; or a dunghill were too good for me.

Hec. How much hast there?

Fire. Nineteen, and all brave plump ones; besides six lizards, and three serpentine eggs.

Hec. Dear and sweet boy! What herbs hast thou?

Fire. I have some mar-martin, and man-dragon.

Hec. Marmarittin, and mandragora, thou would'st say.

Fire. Here's pannax, too. I thank thee; my pan akes, I am sure, with kneeling down to cut 'em.

Hec. And selago,
Hedge-hissop too! How near he goes my cuttings!
Were they all cropt by moon-light?
Fire. Every blade of 'em, or I'm a moon-calf, mother.
Hec. Hie thee home with 'em.
Look well to th' house to-night: I'm for aloft.

Fire. Aloft, quoth you! I would you would break your neck once, that I might have all quickly (*Aside*).—Hark, hark, mother! They are above the steeple already, flying over your head with a noise of musicians.

Hec. They are indeed. Help me! Help me! I'm too late else.

SONG, (*in the air above*).

Come away, come away!
Heccat, Heccat, come away!
Hec. I come, I come, I come, I come,
With all the speed I may,
With all the speed I may.
Where's Stadlin?
(*Above*). Here.

Hec. Where's Puckle?
(*Above*). Here:
And Hoppo too, and Hellwain too:
We lack but you, we lack but you.
Come away, make up the count!
Hec. I will but 'noint, and then I mount.

(*A Spirit descends in the shape of a Cat*).

(*Above*). There's one come down to fetch his dues;
A kiss, a coll, a sip of blood;
And why thou stay'st so long, I muse, I muse,
Since th' air's so sweet and good?
Hec. Oh, art thou come,
What news, what news?
Spirit. All goes still to our delight,
Either come, or else
Refuse, refuse.
Hec. Now I am furnish'd for the flight.
Fire. Hark, hark! The cat sings a brave treble in her own language.
Hec. (*Ascending with the Spirit*).
Now I go, now I fly,
Malkin, my sweet spirit, and I.
Oh, what a dainty pleasure 'tis
To ride in the air
When the moon shines fair,
And sing, and dance, and toy, and kiss!
Over woods, high rocks, and mountains,
Over seas our mistress' fountains,
Over steep towers and turrets,
We fly by night, 'mongst troops of spirits.
No ring of bells to our ears sounds,
No howls of wolves, no yelp of hounds:
No, not the noise of water's breach,
Or cannon's roar, our height can reach.
(*Above*) No ring of bells, &c.

Fire. Well, mother, I thank you for your kindness. You must be gamboling i' th' air, and leave me here like a fool and a mortal. [*Exit.*'

The Incantation scene at the cauldron, is also the original of that in Macbeth, and is in like manner introduced by the Duchess's visiting the Witches' Habitation.

'*The Witches' Habitation.*

Enter Duchess, Heccat, Firestone.

Hec. What death is't you desire for Almachildes?
Duch. A sudden and a subtle.
Hec. Then I've fitted you.
Here lie the gifts of both; sudden and subtle;

His picture made in wax, and gently molten
By a blue fire, kindled with dead men's eyes,
Will waste him by degrees.
Duch. In what time, pr'ythee?
Hec. Perhaps in a month's progress.
Duch. What? A month?
Out upon pictures! If they be so tedious,
Give me things with some life.
Hec. Then seek no farther.
Duch. This must be done with speed, dispatched this night,
If it may possibly.
Hec. I have it for you:
Here 's that will do 't. Stay but perfection's time,
And that 's not five hours hence.
Duch. Can'st thou do this?
Hec. Can I?
Duch. I mean, so closely.
Hec. So closely do you mean too?
Duch. So artfully, so cunningly.
Hec. Worse and worse; doubts and incredulities,
They make me mad. Let scrupulous creatures know,
Cum volui, ripis ipsis mirantibus, amnes
In fontes rediere suos: concussaque sisto,
Stantia concutio cantu freta; nubila pello,
Nubilaque induco: ventos abigoque vocoque.
Vipereas rumpo verbis et carmine fauces;
Et silvas moveo, jubeoque tremiscere montes,
Et mugire solum, manesque exire sepulchres.
Te quoque luna traho.
Can you doubt me then, daughter?
That can make mountains tremble, miles of woods walk;
Whole earth's foundations bellow, and the spirits
Of the entomb'd to burst out from their marbles;
Nay, draw yon moon to my involv'd designs?
Fire. I know as well as can be when my mother 's mad, and our great cat angry; for one spits French then, and th' other spits Latin.
Duch. I did not doubt you, mother.
Hec. No? what did you?
My power 's so firm, it is not to be question'd.
Duch. Forgive what 's past: and now I know th' offensiveness
That vexes art, I 'll shun th' occasion ever.
Hec. Leave all to me and my five sisters, daughter.
It shall be conveyed in at howlet-time.
Take you no care. My spirits know their moments;
Raven or scritch-owl never fly by th' door,
But they call in (I thank 'em), and they lose not by 't.
I give 'em barley soak'd in infants' blood:
They shall have *semina cum sanguine*,
Their gorge cramm'd full, if they come once to our house:

We are no niggard. [*Exit* Duchess.

Fire. They fare but too well when they come hither. They ate up as much t' other night as would have made me a good conscionable pudding.

Hec. Give me some lizard's brain: quickly, Firestone!
Where 's grannam Stadlin, and all the rest o' th' sisters?

Fire. All at hand, forsooth.

Hec. Give me marmaritin; some bear-breech. When?

Fire. Here 's bear-breech and lizard's brain, forsooth.

Hec. Into the vessel;
And fetch three ounces of the red-hair'd girl
I kill'd last midnight.

Fire. Whereabouts, sweet mother?

Hec. Hip; hip or flank. Where is the acopus?

Fire. You shall have acopus, forsooth.

Hec. Stir, stir about, whilst I begin the charm.

A CHARM SONG,

(*The Witches going about the Cauldron*).

Black spirits, and white; red spirits, and gray;
Mingle, mingle, mingle, you that mingle may.
  Titty, Tiffin, keep it stiff in;
  Firedrake, Puckey, make it lucky;
  Liard, Robin, you must bob in.
Round, around, around, about, about;
All ill come running in; all good keep out!

1st Witch. Here 's the blood of a bat.
Hec. Put in that; oh, put in that.
2d Witch. Here 's libbard's-bane.
Hec. Put in again.
1st Witch. The juice of toad; the oil of adder.
2d Witch. Those will make the yonker madder.
Hec. Put in: there 's all, and rid the stench.
Fire. Nay, here 's three ounces of the red-hair'd wench.
All. Round, around, around, &c.
Hec. See, see enough: into the vessel with it.
There; 't hath the true perfection. I 'm so light
At any mischief: there 's no villainy
But is in tune, methinks.

Fire. A tune! 'Tis to the tune of damnation then. I warrant you that song hath a villainous burthen.

Hec. Come, my sweet sisters; let the air strike our tune,
Whilst we show reverence to yond peeping moon.
[*The Witches dance, and then exeunt.*'

I will conclude this account with Mr. Lamb's observations on the distinctive characters of these extraordinary and formidable personages, as they are described by Middleton or Shakespear.

'Though some resemblance may be traced between the charms in

Macbeth and the incantations in this play, which is supposed to have preceded it, this coincidence will not detract much from the originality of Shakespear. His witches are distinguished from the witches of Middleton by essential differences. These are creatures to whom man or woman, plotting some dire mischief, might resort for occasional consultation. Those originate deeds of blood, and begin bad impulses to men. From the moment that their eyes first meet Macbeth's, he is spell-bound. That meeting sways his destiny. He can never break the fascination. These Witches can hurt the body; those have power over the soul.—Hecate, in Middleton, has a son, a low buffoon: the Hags of Shakespear have neither child of their own, nor seem to be descended from any parent. They are foul anomalies, of whom we know not whence they sprung, nor whether they have beginning or ending. As they are without human passions, so they seem to be without human relations. They come with thunder and lightning, and vanish to airy music. This is all we know of them. —Except Hecate, they have no names, which heightens their mysteriousness. The names, and some of the properties which Middleton has given to his Hags, excite smiles. The Weird Sisters are serious things. Their presence cannot consist with mirth. But in a lesser degree, the Witches of Middleton are fine creations. Their power too is, in some measure, over the mind. They "raise jars, jealousies, strifes, like a thick scurf o'er life."'

LECTURE III

ON MARSTON, CHAPMAN, DECKAR, AND WEBSTER

The writers of whom I have already treated, may be said to have been 'no mean men'; those of whom I have yet to speak, are certainly no whit inferior. Would that I could do them any thing like justice! It is not difficult to give at least their seeming due to great and well-known names; for the sentiments of the reader meet the descriptions of the critic more than half way, and clothe what is perhaps vague and extravagant praise with a substantial form and distinct meaning. But in attempting to extol the merits of an obscure work of genius, our words are either lost in empty air, or are 'blown stifling back' upon the mouth that utters them. The greater those merits are, and the truer the praise, the more suspicious and disproportionate does it almost necessarily appear; for it has no relation to any image previously existing in the public mind, and therefore looks

like an imposition fabricated out of nothing. In this case, the only way that I know of is, to make these old writers (as much as can be) vouchers for their own pretensions, which they are well able to make good. I shall in the present Lecture give some account of Marston and Chapman, and afterwards of Deckar and Webster.

Marston is a writer of great merit, who rose to tragedy from the ground of comedy, and whose *forte* was not sympathy, either with the stronger or softer emotions, but an impatient scorn and bitter indignation against the vices and follies of men, which vented itself either in comic irony or in lofty invective. He was properly a satirist. He was not a favourite with his contemporaries, nor they with him. He was first on terms of great intimacy, and afterwards at open war, with Ben Jonson; and he is most unfairly criticised in The Return from Parnassus, under the name of Monsieur Kinsayder, as a mere libeller and buffoon. Writers in their life-time do all they can to degrade and vilify one another, and expect posterity to have a very tender care of their reputations! The writers of this age, in general, cannot however be reproached with this infirmity. The number of plays that they wrote in conjunction, is a proof of the contrary; and a circumstance no less curious, as to the division of intellectual labour, than the cordial union of sentiment it implied. Unlike most poets, the love of their art surmounted their hatred of one another. Genius was not become a vile and vulgar pretence, and they respected in others what they knew to be true inspiration in themselves. They courted the applause of the multitude, but came to one another for judgment and assistance. When we see these writers working together on the same admirable productions, year after year, as was the case with Beaumont and Fletcher, Middleton and Rowley, with Chapman, Deckar, and Jonson, it reminds one of Ariosto's eloquent apostrophe to the Spirit of Ancient Chivalry, when he has seated his rival knights, Renaldo and Ferraw, on the same horse.

'Oh ancient knights of true and noble heart,
They rivals were, one faith they liv'd not under;
Besides, they felt their bodies shrewdly smart
Of blows late given, and yet (behold a wonder)
Thro' thick and thin, suspicion set apart,
Like friends they ride, and parted not asunder,
Until the horse with double spurring drived
Unto a way parted in two, arrived.'[1]

Marston's Antonio and Mellida is a tragedy of considerable force and pathos; but in the most critical parts, the author frequently breaks

[1] Sir John Harrington's translation.

off or flags without any apparent reason but want of interest in his subject; and farther, the best and most affecting situations and bursts of feeling are too evidently imitations of Shakespear. Thus the unexpected meeting between Andrugio and Lucio, in the beginning of the third act, is a direct counterpart of that between Lear and Kent, only much weakened: and the interview between Antonio and Mellida has a strong resemblance to the still more affecting one between Lear and Cordelia, and is most wantonly disfigured by the sudden introduction of half a page of Italian rhymes, which gives the whole an air of burlesque. The conversation of Lucio and Andrugio, again, after his defeat seems to invite, but will not bear a comparison with Richard the Second's remonstrance with his courtiers, who offered him consolation in his misfortunes; and no one can be at a loss to trace the allusion to Romeo's conduct on being apprized of his banishment, in the termination of the following speech.

'*Antonio.* Each man takes hence life, but no man death;
He's a good fellow, and keeps open house:
A thousand thousand ways lead to his gate,
To his wide-mouthed porch: when niggard life
Hath but one little, little wicket through.
We wring ourselves into this wretched world
To pule and weep, exclaim, to curse and rail,
To fret and ban the fates, *to strike the earth*
As I do now. Antonio, curse thy birth,
And die.'

The following short passage might be quoted as one of exquisite beauty and originality—

—'As having clasp'd a rose
Within my palm, the rose being ta'en away,
My hand retains a little breath of sweet;
So may man's trunk, his spirit slipp'd away,
Hold still a faint perfume of his sweet guest.'
Act IV. Scene 1.

The character of Felice in this play is an admirable satirical accompaniment, and is the favourite character of this author (in all probability his own), that of a shrewd, contemplative cynic, and sarcastic spectator in the drama of human life. It runs through all his plays, is shared by Quadratus and Lampatho in WHAT YOU WILL (it is into the mouth of the last of these that he has put that fine invective against the uses of philosophy, in the account of himself and his spaniel, 'who still slept while he baus'd leaves, tossed o'er the dunces, por'd on the old print'), and is at its height in the Fawn and Malevole, in

his Parasitaster and Malcontent. These two comedies are his *chef d'œuvres*. The character of the Duke Hercules of Ferrara, disguised as the Parasite, in the first of these, is well sustained throughout, with great sense, dignity, and spirit. He is a wise censurer of men and things, and rails at the world with charitable bitterness. He may put in a claim to a sort of family likeness to the Duke, in Measure for Measure: only the latter descends from his elevation to watch in secret over serious crimes; the other is only a spy on private follies. There is something in this cast of character (at least in comedy—perhaps it neutralizes the tone and interest in tragedy), that finds a wonderful reciprocity in the breast of the reader or audience. It forms a kind of middle term or point of union between the busy actors in the scene and the indifferent byestander, insinuates the plot, and suggests a number of good wholesome reflections, for the sagacity and honesty of which we do not fail to take credit to ourselves. We are let into its confidence, and have a perfect reliance on its sincerity. Our sympathy with it is without any drawback; for it has no part to perform itself, and 'is nothing, if not critical.' It is a sure card to play. We may doubt the motives of heroic actions, or differ about the just limits and extreme workings of the passions; but the professed misanthrope is a character that no one need feel any scruples in trusting, since the dislike of folly and knavery in the abstract is common to knaves and fools with the wise and honest! Besides the instructive moral vein of Hercules as the Fawn or Parasitaster, which contains a world of excellent matter, most aptly and wittily delivered; there are two other characters perfectly hit off, Gonzago the old prince of Urbino, and Granuffo, one of his lords in waiting. The loquacious, good-humoured, undisguised vanity of the one is excellently relieved by the silent gravity of the other. The wit of this last character (Granuffo) consists in his not speaking a word through the whole play; he never contradicts what is said, and only assents by implication. He is a most infallible courtier, and follows the prince like his shadow, who thus graces his pretensions.

'We would be private, only Faunus stay; he is a wise fellow, daughter, a very wise fellow, for he is still just of my opinion; my Lord Granuffo, you may likewise stay, for I know you'll say nothing.'

And again, a little farther on, he says—

'Faunus, this Granuffo is a right wise good lord, a man of excellent discourse, and never speaks; his signs to me and men of profound reach instruct abundantly; he begs suits with signs, gives thanks with signs, puts off his hat leisurely, maintains his beard learnedly, keeps his lust privately, makes a nodding leg courtly, and lives happily.'—'Silence,' replies Hercules,

'is an excellent modest grace; but especially before so instructing a wisdom as that of your Excellency.'

The garrulous self-complacency of this old lord is kept up in a vein of pleasant humour; an instance of which might be given in his owning of some learned man, that 'though he was no duke, yet he was wise;' and the manner in which the others play upon this foible, and make him contribute to his own discomfiture, without his having the least suspicion of the plot against him, is full of ingenuity and counterpoint. In the last scene he says, very characteristically,

'Of all creatures breathing, I do hate those things that struggle to seem wise, and yet are indeed very fools. I remember when I was a young man, in my father's days, there were four gallant spirits for resolution, as proper for body, as witty in discourse, as any were in Europe; nay, Europe had not such. I was one of them. We four did all love one lady; a most chaste virgin she was: we all enjoyed her, and so enjoyed her, that, despite the strictest guard was set upon her, we had her at our pleasure. I speak it for her honour, and my credit. Where shall you find such witty fellows now a-days? Alas! how easy is it in these weaker times to cross love-tricks! Ha! ha! ha! Alas, alas! I smile to think (I must confess with some glory to mine own wisdom), to think how I found out, and crossed, and curbed, and in the end made desperate Tiberio's love. Alas! good silly youth, that dared to cope with age and such a beard!

Hercules. But what yet might your well-known wisdom think,
If such a one, as being most severe,
A most protested opposite to the match
Of two young lovers; who having barr'd them speech,
All interviews, all messages, all means
To plot their wished ends; even he himself
Was by their cunning made the go-between,
The only messenger, the token-carrier;
Told them the times when they might fitly meet,
Nay, shew'd the way to one another's bed?'

To which Gonzago replies, in a strain of exulting dotage:

'May one have the sight of such a fellow for nothing? Doth there breathe such an egregious ass? Is there such a foolish animal in *rerum natura*? How is it possible such a simplicity can exist? Let us not lose our laughing at him, for God's sake; let folly's sceptre light upon him, and to the ship of fools with him instantly.

Dondolo. Of all these follies I arrest your grace.'

Molière has built a play on nearly the same foundation, which is not much superior to the present. Marston, among other topics of satire, has a fling at the pseudo-critics and philosophers of his time,

who were 'full of wise saws and modern instances.' Thus he freights his Ship of Fools:

'*Dondolo.* Yes, yes; but they got a supersedeas; all of them proved themselves either knaves or madmen, and so were let go: there's none left now in our ship but a few citizens that let their wives keep their shop-books, some philosophers, and a few critics; one of which critics has lost his flesh with fishing at the measure of Plautus' verses; another has vowed to get the consumption of the lungs, or to leave to posterity the true orthography and pronunciation of laughing.

Hercules. But what philosophers ha' ye?

Dondolo. Oh very strange fellows; one knows nothing, dares not aver he lives, goes, sees, feels.

Nymphadoro. A most insensible philosopher.

Dondolo. Another, that there is no present time; and that one man to-day and to-morrow, is not the same man; so that he that yesterday owed money, to-day owes none; because he is not the same man.

Herod. Would that philosophy hold good in law?

Hercules. But why has the Duke thus laboured to have all the fools shipped out of his dominions?

Dondolo. Marry, because he would play the fool alone without any rival.'

Act IV.

Molière has enlarged upon the same topic in his *Mariage Forcé*, but not with more point or effect. Nymphadoro's reasons for devoting himself to the sex generally, and Hercules's description of the different qualifications of different men, will also be found to contain excellent specimens, both of style and matter.—The disguise of Hercules as the Fawn, is assumed voluntarily, and he is comparatively a calm and dispassionate observer of the times. Malevole's disguise in the Malcontent has been forced upon him by usurpation and injustice, and his invectives are accordingly more impassioned and virulent. His satire does not 'like a wild goose fly, unclaimed of any man,' but has a bitter and personal application. Take him in the words of the usurping Duke's account of him.

'This Malevole is one of the most prodigious affections that ever conversed with Nature; a man, or rather a monster, more discontent than Lucifer when he was thrust out of the presence. His appetite is unsatiable as the grave, as far from any content as from heaven. His highest delight is to procure others vexation, and therein he thinks he truly serves Heaven; for 'tis his position, whosoever in this earth can be contented, is a slave, and damned; therefore does he afflict all, in that to which they are most affected. The elements struggle with him; his own soul is at variance with herself; his speech is halter-worthy at all hours. I like him, faith; he gives good intelligence to my spirit, makes me understand those weaknesses which others' flattery palliates.

Hark! they sing.

Enter Malevole, *after the Song.*

Pietro Jacomo. See he comes! Now shall you hear the extremity of a Malcontent; he is as free as air; he blows over every man. And—Sir, whence come you now?

Malevole. From the public place of much dissimulation, the church.

Pietro Jacomo. What didst there?

Malevole. Talk with a usurer; take up at interest.

Pietro Jacomo. I wonder what religion thou art of?

Malevole. Of a soldier's religion.

Pietro Jacomo. And what dost think makes most infidels now?

Malevole. Sects, sects. I am weary: would I were one of the Duke's hounds.

Pietro Jacomo. But what's the common news abroad? Thou dogg'st rumour still.

Malevole. Common news? Why, common words are, God save ye, fare ye well: common actions, flattery and cozenage: common things, women and cuckolds.' *Act I. Scene* 3.

In reading all this, one is somehow reminded perpetually of Mr. Kean's acting: in Shakespear we do not often think of him, except in those parts which he constantly acts, and in those one cannot forget him. I might observe on the above passage, in excuse for some bluntnesses of style, that the ideal barrier between names and things seems to have been greater then than now. Words have become instruments of more importance than formerly. To mention certain actions, is almost to participate in them, as if consciousness were the same as guilt. The standard of delicacy varies at different periods, as it does in different countries, and is not a general test of superiority. The French, who pique themselves (and justly, in some particulars) on their quickness of tact and refinement of breeding, say and do things which we, a plainer and coarser people, could not think of without a blush. What would seem gross allusions to us at present, were without offence to our ancestors, and many things passed for jests with them, or matters of indifference, which would not now be endured. Refinement of language, however, does not keep pace with simplicity of manners. The severity of criticism exercised in our theatres towards some unfortunate straggling phrases in the old comedies, is but an ambiguous compliment to the immaculate purity of modern times. Marston's style was by no means more guarded than that of his contemporaries. He was also much more of a free-thinker than Marlowe, and there is a frequent, and not unfavourable allusion in his works, to later sceptical opinions.—In the play of the Malcontent we meet with an occasional mixture of comic gaiety, to relieve the more serious and painful business of the scene, as in the easy loquacious effrontery of the old *intriguante* Maquerella, and in

the ludicrous facility with which the idle courtiers avoid or seek the notice of Malevole, as he is in or out of favour; but the general tone and import of the piece is severe and moral. The plot is somewhat too intricate and too often changed (like the shifting of a scene), so as to break and fritter away the interest at the end; but the part of Aurelia, the Duchess of Pietro Jacomo, a dissolute and proud-spirited woman, is the highest strain of Marston's pen. The scene in particular, in which she receives and exults in the supposed news of her husband's death, is nearly unequalled in boldness of conception and in the unrestrained force of passion, taking away not only the consciousness of guilt, but overcoming the sense of shame.[1]

Next to Marston, I must put Chapman, whose name is better known as the translator of Homer than as a dramatic writer. He is, like Marston, a philosophic observer, a didactic reasoner: but he has both more gravity in his tragic style, and more levity in his comic vein. His Bussy d'Ambois, though not without interest or some fancy, is rather a collection of apophthegms or pointed sayings in the form of a dialogue, than a poem or a tragedy. In his verses the oracles have not ceased. Every other line is an axiom in morals—a libel on mankind, if truth is a libel. He is too stately for a wit, in his serious writings—too formal for a poet. Bussy d'Ambois is founded on a French plot and French manners. The character, from which it derives its name, is arrogant and ostentatious to an unheard-of degree, but full of nobleness and lofty spirit. His pride and unmeasured pretensions alone take away from his real merit; and by the quarrels and intrigues in which they involve him, bring about the catastrophe, which has considerable grandeur and imposing effect, in the manner of Seneca. Our author aims at the highest things in poetry, and tries in vain, wanting imagination and passion, to fill up the epic moulds of tragedy with sense and reason alone, so that he often runs into bombast and turgidity—is extravagant and pedantic at one and the same time. From the nature of the plot, which turns upon a love intrigue, much of the philosophy of this piece relates to the character of the sex. Milton says,

'The way of women's will is hard to hit.'

But old Chapman professes to have found the clue to it, and winds his uncouth way through all the labyrinth of love. Its deepest recesses 'hide nothing from his view.' The close intrigues of court policy, the subtle workings of the human soul, move before him like a sea dark, deep, and glittering with wrinkles for the smile of beauty.

[1] See the conclusion of Lecture IV.

Fulke Greville alone could go beyond him in gravity and mystery. The plays of the latter (Mustapha and Alaham) are abstruse as the mysteries of old, and his style inexplicable as the riddles of the Sphinx. As an instance of his love for the obscure, the marvellous, and impossible, he calls up 'the ghost of one of the old kings of Ormus,' as prologue to one of his tragedies; a very reverend and inscrutable personage, who, we may be sure, blabs no living secrets. Chapman, in his other pieces, where he lays aside the gravity of the philosopher and poet, discovers an unexpected comic vein, distinguished by equal truth of nature and lively good humour. I cannot say that this character pervades any one of his entire comedies; but the introductory sketch of Monsieur D'Olive is the undoubted prototype of that light, flippant, gay, and infinitely delightful class of character, of the professed men of wit and pleasure about town, which we have in such perfection in Wycherley and Congreve, such as Sparkish, Witwoud and Petulant, &c. both in the sentiments and in the style of writing. For example, take the last scene of the first act.

'*Enter* D'Olive.

Rhoderique. What, Monsieur D'Olive, the only admirer of wit and good words.

D'Olive. Morrow, wits: morrow, good wits: my little parcels of wit, I have rods in pickle for you. How dost, Jack; may I call thee, sir, Jack yet?

Mugeron. You may, sir; sir's as commendable an addition as Jack, for ought I know.

D'Ol. I know it, Jack, and as common too.

Rhod. Go to, you may cover; we have taken notice of your embroidered beaver.

D'Ol. Look you: by heaven thou 'rt one of the maddest bitter slaves in Europe: I do but wonder how I made shift to love thee all this while.

Rhod. Go to, what might such a parcel-gilt cover be worth?

Mug. Perhaps more than the whole piece beside.

D'Ol. Good i' faith, but bitter. Oh, you mad slaves, I think you had Satyrs to your sires, yet I must love you, I must take pleasure in you, and i' faith tell me, how is 't? live I see you do, but how? but how, wits?

Rhod. Faith, as you see, like poor younger brothers.

D'Ol. By your wits?

Mug. Nay, not turned poets neither.

D'Ol. Good in sooth! but indeed to say truth, time was when the sons of the Muses had the privilege to live only by their wits, but times are altered, Monopolies are now called in, and wit 's become a free trade for all sorts to live by: lawyers live by wit, and they live worshipfully: soldiers live by wit, and they live honourably: panders live by wit, and they live honestly: in a word, there are but few trades but live by wit, only bawds and midwives live by women's labours, as fools and fiddlers do by making

mirth, pages and parasites by making legs, painters and players by making mouths and faces: ha, does 't well, wits?

Rhod. Faith, thou followest a figure in thy jests, as country gentlemen follow fashions, when they be worn threadbare.

D'Ol. Well, well, let 's leave these wit skirmishes, and say when shall we meet?

Mug. How think you, are we not met now?

D'Ol. Tush, man! I mean at my chamber, where we may take free use of ourselves; that is, drink sack, and talk satire, and let our wits run the wild-goose chase over court and country. I will have my chamber the rendezvous of all good wits, the shop of good words, the mint of good jests, an ordinary of fine discourse; critics, essayists, linguists, poets, and other professors of that faculty of wit, shall, at certain hours i' th' day, resort thither; it shall be a second Sorbonne, where all doubts or differences of learning, honour, duellism, criticism, and poetry, shall be disputed: and how, wits, do ye follow the court still?

Rhod. Close at heels, sir; and I can tell you, you have much to answer to your stars, that you do not so too.

D'Ol. As why, wits? as why?

Rhod. Why, sir, the court 's as 'twere the stage: and they that have a good suit of parts and qualities, ought to press thither to grace them, and receive their due merit.

D'Ol. Tush, let the court follow me: he that soars too near the sun, melts his wings many times; as I am, I possess myself, I enjoy my liberty, my learning, my wit: as for wealth and honour, let 'em go; I 'll not lose my learning to be a lord, nor my wit to be an alderman.

Mug. Admirable D'Olive!

D'Ol. And what! you stand gazing at this comet here, and admire it, I dare say.

Rhod. And do not you?

D'Ol. Not I, I admire nothing but wit.

Rhod. But I wonder how she entertains time in that solitary cell: does she not take tobacco, think you?

D'Ol. She does, she does: others make it their physic, she makes it her food: her sister and she take it by turn, first one, then the other, and Vandome ministers to them both.

Mug. How sayest thou by that Helen of Greece the Countess's sister? there were a paragon, Monsieur D'Olive, to admire and marry too.

D'Ol. Not for me.

Rhod. No? what exceptions lie against the choice?

D'Ol. Tush, tell me not of choice; if I stood affected that way, I would choose my wife as men do Valentines, blindfold, or draw cuts for them, for so I shall be sure not to be deceived in choosing; for take this of me, there 's ten times more deceit in women than in horse-flesh; and I say still, that a pretty well-pac'd chamber-maid is the only fashion; if she grows full or fulsome, give her but sixpence to buy her a hand-basket, and send her the way of all flesh, there 's no more but so.

Mug. Indeed that 's the savingest way.

D'Ol. O me! what a hell 'tis for a man to be tied to the continual

charge of a coach, with the appurtenances, horses, men, and so forth: and then to have a man's house pestered with a whole country of guests, grooms, panders, waiting-maids, &c. I careful to please my wife, she careless to displease me; shrewish if she be honest; intolerable if she be wise; imperious as an empress; all she does must be law, all she says gospel: oh, what a penance 'tis to endure her! I glad to forbear still, all to keep her loyal, and yet perhaps when all 's done, my heir shall be like my horse-keeper: fie on 't! the very thought of marriage were able to cool the hottest liver in France.

Rhod. Well, I durst venture twice the price of your gilt coney's wool, we shall have you change your copy ere a twelvemonth's day.

Mug. We must have you dubb'd o' th' order; there 's no remedy: you that have, unmarried, done such honourable service in the commonwealth, must needs receive the honour due to 't in marriage.

Rhod. That he may do, and never marry.

D'Ol. As how, wits? i' faith as how?

Rhod. For if he can prove his father was free o' th' order, and that he was his father's son, then, by the laudable custom of the city, he may be a cuckold by his father's copy, and never serve for 't.

D'Ol. Ever good i' faith!

Mug. Nay how can he plead that, when 'tis as well known his father died a bachelor?

D'Ol. Bitter, in verity, bitter! But good still in its kind.

Rhod. Go to, we must have you follow the lantern of your forefathers.

Mug. His forefathers? S'body, had he more fathers than one?

D'Ol. Why, this is right: here 's wit canvast out on 's coat, into 's jacket: the string sounds ever well, that rubs not too much o' th' frets: I must love your wits, I must take pleasure in you. Farewell, good wits: you know my lodging, make an errand thither now and then, and save your ordinary; do, wits, do.

Mug. We shall be troublesome t' ye.

D'Ol. O God, sir, you wrong me, to think I can be troubled with wit: I love a good wit as I love myself: if you need a brace or two of crowns at any time, address but your sonnet, it shall be as sufficient as your bond at all times: I carry half a score birds in a cage, shall ever remain at your call. Farewell, wits; farewell, good wits. [*Exit.*

Rhod. Farewell the true map of a gull: by heaven he shall to th' court! 'tis the perfect model of an impudent upstart; the compound of a poet and a lawyer; he shall sure to th' court.

Mug. Nay, for God's sake, let 's have no fools at court.

Rhod. He shall to 't, that 's certain. The Duke had a purpose to dispatch some one or other to the French king, to entreat him to send for the body of his niece, which the melancholy Earl of St. Anne, her husband, hath kept so long unburied, as meaning one grave should entomb himself and her together.

Mug. A very worthy subject for an embassage, as D'Olive is for an embassador agent; and 'tis as suitable to his brain, as his parcel-gilt beaver to his fool's head.

Rhod. Well, it shall go hard, but he shall be employed. Oh, 'tis a most

accomplished ass; the mongrel of a gull, and a villain: the very essence of his soul is pure villainy; the substance of his brain, foolery: one that believes nothing from the stars upward; a pagan in belief, an epicure beyond belief; prodigious in lust; prodigal in wasteful expense; in necessary, most penurious. His wit is to admire and imitate; his grace is to censure and detract; he shall to th' court, i' faith he shall thither: I will shape such employment for him, as that he himself shall have no less contentment, in making mirth to the whole court, than the Duke and the whole court shall have pleasure in enjoying his presence. A knave, if he be rich, is fit to make an officer, as a fool, if he be a knave, is fit to make an intelligencer. [*Exeunt.*'

His May-Day is not so good. All Fools, The Widow's Tears, and Eastward Hoe, are comedies of great merit, (particularly the last). The first is borrowed a good deal from Terence, and the character of Valerio, an accomplished rake, who passes with his father for a person of the greatest economy and rusticity of manners, is an excellent idea, executed with spirit. Eastward Hoe was written in conjunction with Ben Jonson and Marston; and for his share in it, on account of some allusions to the Scotch, just after the accession of James I. our author, with his friends, had nearly lost his ears. Such were the notions of poetical justice in those days! The behaviour of Ben Jonson's mother on this occasion is remarkable. 'On his release from prison, he gave an entertainment to his friends, among whom were Camden and Selden. In the midst of the entertainment, his mother, more an antique Roman than a Briton, drank to him, and shewed him a paper of poison, which she intended to have given him in his liquor, having first taken a portion of it herself, if the sentence for his punishment had been executed.' This play contains the first idea of Hogarth's Idle and Industrious Apprentices.

It remains for me to say something of Webster and Deckar. For these two writers I do not know how to shew my regard and admiration sufficiently. Noble-minded Webster, gentle-hearted Deckar, how may I hope to 'express ye unblam'd,' and repay to your neglected *manes* some part of the debt of gratitude I owe for proud and soothing recollections? I pass by the Appius and Virginia of the former, which is however a good, sensible, solid tragedy, cast in a frame-work of the most approved models, with little to blame or praise in it, except the affecting speech of Appius to Virginia just before he kills her; as well as Deckar's Wonder of a Kingdom, his Jacomo Gentili, that truly ideal character of a magnificent patron, and Old Fortunatus and his Wishing-cap, which last has the idle garrulity of age, with the freshness and gaiety of youth still upon its cheek and in its heart. These go into the common catalogue, and are lost in the

crowd; but Webster's Vittoria Corombona I cannot so soon part with; and old honest Deckar's Signior Orlando Friscobaldo I shall never forget! I became only of late acquainted with this last-mentioned worthy character; but the bargain between us is, I trust, for life. We sometimes regret that we had not sooner met with characters like these, that seem to raise, revive, and give a new zest to our being. Vain the complaint! We should never have known their value, if we had not known them always: they are old, very old acquaintance, or we should not recognise them at first sight. We only find in books what is already written within 'the red-leaved tables of our hearts.' The pregnant materials are there; 'the pangs, the internal pangs are ready; and poor humanity's afflicted will struggling in vain with ruthless destiny.' But the reading of fine poetry may indeed open the bleeding wounds, or pour balm and consolation into them, or sometimes even close them up for ever! Let any one who has never known cruel disappointment, nor comfortable hopes, read the first scene between Orlando and Hippolito, in Deckar's play of the Honest Whore, and he will see nothing in it. But I think few persons will be entirely proof against such passages as some of the following.

'*Enter* Orlando Friscobaldo.

Omnes. Signior Friscobaldo.

Hipolito. Friscobaldo, oh! pray call him, and leave me; we two have business.

Carolo. Ho, Signior! Signior Friscobaldo, the Lord Hipolito. [*Exeunt.*

Orlando. My noble Lord! the Lord Hipolito! The Duke's son! his brave daughter's brave husband! How does your honour'd Lordship? Does your nobility remember so poor a gentleman as Signior Orlando Friscobaldo? old mad Orlando?

Hip. Oh, Sir, our friends! they ought to be unto us as our jewels; as dearly valued, being locked up and unseen, as when we wear them in our hands. I see, Friscobaldo, age hath not command of your blood; for all time's sickle hath gone over you, you are Orlando still.

Orl. Why, my Lord, are not the fields mown and cut down, and stript bare, and yet wear they not pied coats again? Though my head be like a leek, white, may not my heart be like the blade, green?

Hip. Scarce can I read the stories on your brow,
Which age hath writ there: you look youthful still.

Orl. I eat snakes, my Lord, I eat snakes. My heart shall never have a wrinkle in it, so long as I can cry Hem! with a clear voice. * *

Hip. You are the happier man, Sir.

Orl. May not old Friscobaldo, my Lord, be merry now, ha? I have a little, have all things, have nothing: I have no wife, I have no child, have no chick, and why should I not be in my jocundare?

Hip. Is your wife then departed?

Orl. She's an old dweller in those high countries, yet not from me: here, she's here; a good couple are seldom parted.

Hip. You had a daughter, too, Sir, had you not?

Orl. Oh, my Lord! this old tree had one branch, and but one branch, growing out of it: it was young, it was fair, it was strait: I pruned it daily, drest it carefully, kept it from the wind, help'd it to the sun; yet for all my skill in planting, it grew crooked, it bore crabs: I hew'd it down. What's become of it, I neither know nor care.

Hip. Then can I tell you what's become of it: that branch is wither'd.

Orl. So 'twas long ago.

Hip. Her name, I think, was Bellafront; she's dead.

Orl. Ha! dead?

Hip. Yes, what of her was left, not worth the keeping,
Even in my sight, was thrown into a grave.

Orl. Dead! my last and best peace go with her! I see death's a good trencherman; he can eat coarse homely meat as well as the daintiest—— Is she dead?

Hip. She's turn'd to earth.

Orl. Would she were turned to Heaven. Umph! Is she dead? I am glad the world has lost one of his idols: no whoremonger will at midnight beat at the doors: in her grave sleep all my shame and her own; and all my sorrows, and all her sins.

Hip. I'm glad you are wax, not marble; you are made
Of man's best temper; there are now good hopes
That all these heaps of ice about your heart,
By which a father's love was frozen up,
Are thaw'd in those sweet show'rs fetch'd from your eye:
We are ne'er like angels till our passions die.
She is not dead, but lives under worse fate;
I think she's poor; and more to clip her wings,
Her husband at this hour lies in the jail,
For killing of a man: to save his blood,
Join all your force with mine; mine shall be shown,
The getting of his life preserves your own.

Orl. In my daughter you will say! Does she live then? I am sorry I wasted tears upon a harlot! but the best is, I have a handkerchief to drink them up, soap can wash them all out again. Is she poor?

Hip. Trust me, I think she is.

Orl. Then she's a right strumpet. I never knew one of their trade rich two years together; sieves can hold no water, nor harlots hoard up money: taverns, tailors, bawds, panders, fiddlers, swaggerers, fools, and knaves, do all wait upon a common harlot's trencher; she is the gallypot to which these drones fly: not for love to the pot, but for the sweet sucket in it, her money, her money.

Hip. I almost dare pawn my word, her bosom gives warmth to no such snakes; when did you see her?

Orl. Not seventeen summers.

Hip. Is your hate so old?

Orl. Older; it has a white head, and shall never die 'till she be buried: her wrongs shall be my bed-fellow.

Hip. Work yet his life, since in it lives her fame.

Orl. No, let him hang, and half her infamy departs out of the world; I hate him for her: he taught her first to taste poison; I hate her for herself, because she refused my physic.

Hip. Nay, but Friscobaldo.

Orl. I detest her, I defy both, she 's not mine, she 's—

Hip. Hear her but speak.

Orl. I love no mermaids, I 'll not be caught with a quail-pipe.

Hip. You 're now beyond all reason. Is't dotage to relieve your child, being poor?

Orl. 'Tis foolery; relieve her? Were her cold limbs stretcht out upon a bier, I would not sell this dirt under my nails, to buy her an hour's breath, nor give this hair, unless it were to choak her.

Hip. Fare you well, for I 'll trouble you no more. [*Exit.*

Orl. And fare you well, Sir, go thy ways; we have few lords of thy making, that love wenches for their honesty.—'Las, my girl, art thou poor? Poverty dwells next door to despair, there 's but a wall between them: despair is one of hell's catchpoles, and lest that devil arrest her, I 'll to her; yet she shall not know me: she shall drink of my wealth as beggars do of running water, freely; yet never know from what fountain's head it flows. Shall a silly bird pick her own breast to nourish her young ones: and can a father see his child starve? That were hard: the pelican does it, and shall not I?'

The rest of the character is answerable to the beginning. The execution is, throughout, as exact as the conception is new and masterly. There is the least colour possible used; the pencil drags; the canvas is almost seen through: but then, what precision of outline, what truth and purity of tone, what firmness of hand, what marking of character! The words and answers all along are so true and pertinent, that we seem to see the gestures, and to hear the tone with which they are accompanied. So when Orlando, disguised, says to his daughter, 'You 'll forgive me,' and she replies, 'I am not marble, I forgive you;' or again, when she introduces him to her husband, saying simply, 'It is my father,' there needs no stage-direction to supply the relenting tones of voice or cordial frankness of manner with which these words are spoken. It is as if there were some fine art to chisel thought, and to embody the inmost movements of the mind in every-day actions and familiar speech. It has been asked,

'Oh! who can paint a sun-beam to the blind,
Or make him feel a shadow with his mind?'

But this difficulty is here in a manner overcome. Simplicity and extravagance of style, homeliness and quaintness, tragedy and comedy,

interchangeably set their hands and seals to this admirable production. We find the simplicity of prose with the graces of poetry. The stalk grows out of the ground; but the flowers spread their flaunting leaves in the air. The mixture of levity in the chief character bespeaks the bitterness from which it seeks relief; it is the idle echo of fixed despair, jealous of observation or pity. The sarcasm quivers on the lip, while the tear stands congealed on the eye-lid. This 'tough senior,' this impracticable old gentleman softens into a little child; this choke-pear melts in the mouth like marmalade. In spite of his resolute professions of misanthropy, he watches over his daughter with kindly solicitude; plays the careful housewife; broods over her lifeless hopes; nurses the decay of her husband's fortune, as he had supported her tottering infancy; saves the high-flying Matheo from the gallows more than once, and is twice a father to them. The story has all the romance of private life, all the pathos of bearing up against silent grief, all the tenderness of concealed affection:—there is much sorrow patiently borne, and then comes peace. Bellafront, in the two parts of this play taken together, is a most interesting character. It is an extreme, and I am afraid almost an ideal case. She gives the play its title, turns out a true penitent, that is, a practical one, and is the model of an exemplary wife. She seems intended to establish the converse of the position, that *a reformed rake makes the best husband*, the only difficulty in proving which, is, I suppose, to meet with the character. The change of her relative position, with regard to Hippolito, who, in the first part, in the sanguine enthusiasm of youthful generosity, has reclaimed her from vice, and in the second part, his own faith and love of virtue having been impaired with the progress of years, tries in vain to lure her back again to her former follies, has an effect the most striking and beautiful. The pleadings on both sides, for and against female faith and constancy, are managed with great polemical skill, assisted by the grace and vividness of poetical illustration. As an instance of the manner in which Bellafront speaks of the miseries of her former situation, 'and she has felt them knowingly,' I might give the lines in which she contrasts the different regard shewn to the modest or the abandoned of her sex.

> 'I cannot, seeing she's woven of such bad stuff,
> Set colours on a harlot bad enough.
> Nothing did make me when I lov'd them best,
> To loath them more than this: when in the street
> A fair, young, modest damsel, I did meet;
> She seem'd to all a dove, when I pass'd by,
> And I to all a raven: every eye
> That followed her, went with a bashful glance;

At me each bold and jeering countenance
Darted forth scorn: to her, as if she had been
Some tower unvanquished, would they all vail;
'Gainst me swoln rumour hoisted every sail.
She crown'd with reverend praises, pass'd by them;
I, though with face mask'd, could not 'scape the hem;
For, as if heav'n had set strange marks on whores,
Because they should be pointing-stocks to man,
Drest up in civilest shape, a courtesan,
Let her walk saint-like, noteless, and unknown,
Yet she 's betray'd by some trick of her own.'

Perhaps this sort of appeal to matter of fact and popular opinion, is more convincing than the scholastic subtleties of the Lady in Comus. The manner too, in which Infelice, the wife of Hippolito, is made acquainted with her husband's infidelity, is finely dramatic; and in the scene where she convicts him of his injustice by taxing herself with incontinence first, and then turning his most galling reproaches to her into upbraidings against his own conduct, she acquits herself with infinite spirit and address. The contrivance, by which, in the first part, after being supposed dead, she is restored to life, and married to Hippolito, though perhaps a little far-fetched, is affecting and romantic. There is uncommon beauty in the Duke her father's description of her sudden illness. In reply to Infelice's declaration on reviving, 'I 'm well,' he says,

'Thou wert not so e'en now. Sickness' pale hand
Laid hold on thee, ev'n in the deadst of feasting:
And when a cup, crown'd with thy lover's health,
Had touch'd thy lips, a sensible cold dew
Stood on thy cheeks, as if that death had wept
To see such beauty altered.'

Candido, the good-natured man of this play, is a character of inconceivable quaintness and simplicity. His patience and good-humour cannot be disturbed by any thing. The idea (for it is nothing but an idea) is a droll one, and is well supported. He is not only resigned to injuries, but 'turns them,' as Falstaff says of diseases, 'into commodities.' He is a patient Grizzel out of petticoats, or a Petruchio reversed. He is as determined upon winking at affronts, and keeping out of scrapes at all events, as the hero of the Taming of a Shrew is bent upon picking quarrels out of straws, and signalizing his manhood without the smallest provocation to do so. The sudden turn of the character of Candido, on his second marriage, is, however, as amusing as it is unexpected.

Matheo, 'the high-flying' husband of Bellafront, is a masterly

portrait, done with equal ease and effect. He is a person almost without virtue or vice, that is, he is in strictness without any moral principle at all. He has no malice against others, and no concern for himself. He is gay, profligate, and unfeeling, governed entirely by the impulse of the moment, and utterly reckless of consequences. His exclamation, when he gets a new suit of velvet, or a lucky run on the dice, 'do we not fly high,' is an answer to all arguments. Punishment or advice has no more effect upon him, than upon the moth that flies into the candle. He is only to be left to his fate. Orlando saves him from it, as we do the moth, by snatching it out of the flame, throwing it out of the window, and shutting down the casement upon it!

Webster would, I think, be a greater dramatic genius than Deckar, if he had the same originality; and perhaps is so, even without it. His White Devil and Duchess of Malfy, upon the whole perhaps, come the nearest to Shakespear of any thing we have upon record; the only drawback to them, the only shade of imputation that can be thrown upon them, 'by which they lose some colour,' is, that they are too like Shakespear, and often direct imitations of him, both in general conception and individual expression. So far, there is nobody else whom it would be either so difficult or so desirable to imitate; but it would have been still better, if all his characters had been entirely his own, had stood out as much from others, resting only on their own naked merits, as that of the honest Hidalgo, on whose praises I have dwelt so much above. Deckar has, I think, more truth of character, more instinctive depth of sentiment, more of the unconscious simplicity of nature; but he does not, out of his own stores, clothe his subject with the same richness of imagination, or the same glowing colours of language. Deckar excels in giving expression to certain habitual, deeply-rooted feelings, which remain pretty much the same in all circumstances, the simple uncompounded elements of nature and passion:—Webster gives more scope to their various combinations and changeable aspects, brings them into dramatic play by contrast and comparison, flings them into a state of fusion by a kindled fancy, makes them describe a wider arc of oscillation from the impulse of unbridled passion, and carries both terror and pity to a more painful and sometimes unwarrantable excess. Deckar is contented with the historic picture of suffering; Webster goes on to suggest horrible imaginings. The pathos of the one tells home and for itself; the other adorns his sentiments with some image of tender or awful beauty. In a word, Deckar is more like Chaucer or Boccaccio; as Webster's mind appears to have been cast more in the mould of Shakespear's, as well naturally as from studious emulation.

The Bellafront and Vittoria Corombona of these two excellent writers, shew their different powers and turn of mind. The one is all softness; the other 'all fire and air.' The faithful wife of Matheo sits at home drooping, 'like the female dove, the whilst her golden couplets are disclosed'; while the insulted and persecuted Vittoria darts killing scorn and pernicious beauty at her enemies. This White Devil (as she is called) is made fair as the leprosy, dazzling as the lightning. She is dressed like a bride in her wrongs and her revenge. In the trial-scene in particular, her sudden indignant answers to the questions that are asked her, startle the hearers. Nothing can be imagined finer than the whole conduct and conception of this scene, than her scorn of her accusers and of herself. The sincerity of her sense of guilt triumphs over the hypocrisy of their affected and official contempt for it. In answer to the charge of having received letters from the Duke of Brachiano, she says,

> 'Grant I was tempted:
> Condemn you me, for that the Duke did love me?
> So may you blame some fair and chrystal river,
> For that some melancholic distracted man
> Hath drown'd himself in 't.'

And again, when charged with being accessary to her husband's death, and shewing no concern for it—

> 'She comes not like a widow; she comes arm'd
> With scorn and impudence. Is this a mourning habit?'

she coolly replies,

> 'Had I foreknown his death as you suggest,
> I would have bespoke my mourning.'

In the closing scene with her cold-blooded assassins, Lodovico and Gasparo, she speaks daggers, and might almost be supposed to exorcise the murdering fiend out of these true devils. Every word probes to the quick. The whole scene is the sublime of contempt and indifference.

> '*Vittoria.* If Florence be i' th' Court, he would not kill me.
> *Gasparo.* Fool! princes give rewards with their own hands,
> But death or punishment by the hands of others.
> *Lodovico* (*To* Flamineo). Sirra, you once did strike me;
> I 'll strike you
> Unto the centre.
> *Flam.* Thou 'lt do it like a hangman, a base hangman,
> Not like a noble fellow; for thou see'st

I cannot strike again.
Lod. Dost laugh?
Flam. Would'st have me die, as I was born, In whining?
Gasp. Recommend yourself to Heaven.
Flam. No, I will carry mine own commendations thither.
Lod. Oh! could I kill you forty times a-day,
And use 't four years together, 'twere too little:
Nought grieves, but that you are too few to feed
The famine of our vengeance. What do'st think on?
Flam. Nothing; of nothing: leave thy idle questions—
I am i' th' way to study a long silence.
To prate were idle: I remember nothing;
There 's nothing of so infinite vexation
As man's own thoughts.
Lod. O thou glorious strumpet!
Could I divide thy breath from this pure air
When 't leaves thy body, I would suck it up,
And breathe 't upon some dunghill.
Vit. Cor. You my death's-man!
Methinks thou dost not look horrid enough;
Thou hast too good a face to be a hangman:
If thou be, do thy office in right form;
Fall down upon thy knees, and ask forgiveness.
Lod. O! thou hast been a most prodigious comet;
But I 'll cut off your train: kill the Moor first.
Vit. Cor. You shall not kill her first; behold my breast;
I will be waited on in death: my servant
Shall never go before me.
Gasp. Are you so brave?
Vit. Cor. Yes, I shall welcome death
As princes do some great embassadours;
I 'll meet thy weapon half way.
Lod. Thou dost not tremble!
Methinks, fear should dissolve thee into air.
Vit. Cor. O, thou art deceiv'd, I am too true a woman!
Conceit can never kill me. I 'll tell thee what,
I will not in my death shed one base tear;
Or if look pale, for want of blood, not fear.
Gasp. (*To* Zanche). Thou art my task, black fury.
Zanche. I have blood
As red as either of theirs! Wilt drink some?
'Tis good for the falling-sickness: I am proud
Death cannot alter my complexion,
For I shall ne'er look pale.
Lod. Strike, strike,
With a joint motion.
Vit. Cor. 'Twas a manly blow:
The next thou giv'st, murther some sucking infant,
And then thou wilt be famous.'

Such are some of the *terrible graces* of the obscure, forgotten Webster. There are other parts of this play of a less violent, more subdued, and, if it were possible, even deeper character; such is the declaration of divorce pronounced by Brachiano on his wife:

> 'Your hand I 'll kiss:
> This is the latest ceremony of my love;
> I 'll never more live with you,' &c.

which is in the manner of, and equal to, Deckar's finest things:—and others, in a quite different style of fanciful poetry and bewildered passion; such as the lamentation of Cornelia, his mother, for the death of Marcello, and the parting scene of Brachiano; which would be as fine as Shakespear, if they were not in a great measure borrowed from his inexhaustible store. In the former, after Flamineo has stabbed his brother, and Hortensio comes in, Cornelia exclaims,

> 'Alas! he is not dead; he 's in a trance.
> Why, here 's nobody shall get any thing by his death:
> Let me call him again, for God's sake.
>
> *Hor.* I would you were deceiv'd.
>
> *Corn.* O you abuse me, you abuse me, you abuse me! How many have gone away thus, for want of 'tendance? Rear up 's head, rear up 's head; his bleeding inward will kill him.
>
> *Hor.* You see he is departed.
>
> *Corn.* Let me come to him; give me him as he is. If he be turn'd to earth, let me but give him one hearty kiss, and you shall put us both into one coffin. Fetch a looking-glass: see if his breath will not stain it; or pull out some feathers from my pillow, and lay them to his lips. Will you lose him for a little pains-taking?
>
> *Hor.* Your kindest office is to pray for him.
>
> *Corn.* Alas! I would not pray for him yet. He may live to lay me i' th' ground, and pray for me, if you 'll let me come to him.
>
> *Enter* Brachiano, *all armed, save the Bearer, with* Flamineo *and Page.*
>
> *Brach.* Was this your handy-work?
>
> *Flam.* It was my misfortune.
>
> *Corn.* He lies, he lies; he did not kill him. These have killed him, that would not let him be better looked to.
>
> *Brach.* Have comfort, my griev'd mother.
>
> *Corn.* O, you screech-owl!
>
> *Hor.* Forbear, good madam.
>
> *Corn.* Let me go, let me go.
>
> (*She runs to* Flamineo *with her knife drawn, and coming to him, lets it fall*).
>
> The God of Heav'n forgive thee! Dost not wonder
> I pray for thee? I 'll tell thee what 's the reason:

I have scarce breath to number twenty minutes;
I 'd not spend that in cursing. Fare thee well!
Half of thyself lies there; and may'st thou live
To fill an hour-glass with his moulder'd ashes,
To tell how thou should'st spend the time to come
In blest repentance.
Brach. Mother, pray tell me,
How came he by his death? What was the quarrel?
Corn. Indeed, my younger boy presum'd too much
Upon his manhood, gave him bitter words,
Drew his sword first; and so, I know not how,
For I was out of my wits, he fell with 's head
Just in my bosom.
Page. This is not true, madam.
Corn. I pr'ythee, peace.
One arrow 's graz'd already: it were vain
To lose this; for that will ne'er be found again.'

This is a good deal borrowed from Lear; but the inmost folds of the human heart, the sudden turns and windings of the fondest affection, are also laid open with so masterly and original a hand, that it seems to prove the occasional imitations as unnecessary as they are evident. The scene where the Duke discovers that he is poisoned, is as follows, and equally fine.

'*Brach.* Oh! I am gone already. The infection
Flies to the brain and heart. O, thou strong heart,
There 's such a covenant 'tween the world and thee,
They 're loth to part.
Giovanni. O my most lov'd father!
Brach. Remove the boy away:
Where 's this good woman? Had I infinite worlds,
They were too little for thee. Must I leave thee?
(*To* Vittoria).
What say you, screech-owls. (*To the Physicians*) Is the venom mortal?
Phy. Most deadly.
Brach. Most corrupted politic hangman!
You kill without book; but your art to save
Fails you as oft as great men's needy friends:
I that have given life to offending slaves,
And wretched murderers, have I not power
To lengthen mine own a twelve-month?
Do not kiss me, for I shall poison thee.
This unction is sent from the great Duke of Florence.
Francesco de Medici (in disguise). Sir, be of comfort.
Brach. Oh thou soft natural death! that art joint-twin
To sweetest slumber!—no rough-bearded comet
Stares on thy mild departure: the dull owl
Beats not against thy casement: the hoarse wolf

Scents not thy carrion. Pity winds thy corse,
Whilst horror waits on princes.
Vit. Cor. I am lost for ever.
Brach. How miserable a thing it is to die
'Mongst women howling! What are those?
Flam. Franciscans.
They have brought the extreme unction.
Brach. On pain of death let no man name death to me;
It is a word most infinitely terrible.
Withdraw into our cabinet.'

The deception practised upon him by Lodovico and Gasparo, who offer him the sacrament in the disguise of Monks, and then discover themselves to damn him, is truly diabolical and ghastly. But the genius that suggested it was as profound as it was lofty. When they are at first introduced, Flamineo says,

'See, see how firmly he doth fix his eye
Upon the crucifix.'

To which Vittoria answers,

'Oh, hold it constant:
It settles his wild spirits; and so his eyes
Melt into tears.'

The Duchess of Malfy is not, in my judgment, quite so spirited or effectual a performance as the White Devil. But it is distinguished by the same kind of beauties, clad in the same terrors. I do not know but the occasional strokes of passion are even profounder and more Shakespearian; but the story is more laboured, and the horror is accumulated to an overpowering and insupportable height. However appalling to the imagination and finely done, the scenes of the madhouse to which the Duchess is condemned with a view to unsettle her reason, and the interview between her and her brother, where he gives her the supposed dead hand of her husband, exceed, to my thinking, the just bounds of poetry and of tragedy. At least, the merit is of a kind, which, however great, we wish to be rare. A series of such exhibitions obtruded upon the senses or the imagination must tend to stupefy and harden, rather than to exalt the fancy or meliorate the heart. I speak this under correction; but I hope the objection is a venial common-place. In a different style altogether are the directions she gives about her children in her last struggles;

'I prythee, look thou giv'st my little boy
Some syrop for his cold, and let the girl
Say her pray'rs ere she sleep. Now what death you please—'

and her last word, 'Mercy,' which she recovers just strength enough

to pronounce; her proud answer to her tormentors, who taunt her with her degradation and misery—'But I am Duchess of Malfy still'[1]—as if the heart rose up, like a serpent coiled, to resent the indignities put upon it, and being struck at, struck again; and the staggering reflection her brother makes on her death, 'Cover her face: my eyes dazzle: she died young!' Bosola replies:

> 'I think not so; her infelicity
> Seem'd to have years too many.
> *Ferdinand.* She and I were twins:
> And should I die this instant, I had liv'd
> Her time to a minute.'

This is not the bandying of idle words and rhetorical commonplaces, but the writhing and conflict, and the sublime colloquy of man's nature with itself!

The Revenger's Tragedy, by Cyril Tourneur, is the only other drama equal to these and to Shakespear, in 'the dazzling fence of impassioned argument,' in pregnant illustration, and in those profound reaches of thought, which lay open the soul of feeling. The play, on the whole, does not answer to the expectations it excites; but the appeals of Castiza to her mother, who endeavours to corrupt her virtuous resolutions, 'Mother, come from that poisonous woman there,' with others of the like kind, are of as high and abstracted an essence of poetry, as any of those above mentioned.

In short, the great characteristic of the elder dramatic writers is, that there is nothing theatrical about them. In reading them, you only think how the persons, into whose mouths certain sentiments are put, would have spoken or looked: in reading Dryden and others of that school, you only think, as the authors themselves seem to have done, how they would be ranted on the stage by some buskined hero or tragedy-queen. In this respect, indeed, some of his more obscure contemporaries have the advantage over Shakespear himself, inasmuch as we have never seen their works represented on the stage; and there is no stage-trick to remind us of it. The characters of their heroes have not been cut down to fit into the prompt-book, nor have we ever seen their names flaring in the play-bills in small or large capitals.—I do not mean to speak disrespectfully of the stage; but I think

[1] 'Am I not thy Duchess?
Bosola. Thou art some great woman, sure; for riot begins to sit on thy forehead (clad in gray hairs) twenty years sooner than on a merry milkmaid's. Thou sleep'st worse than if a mouse should be forced to take up his lodging in a cat's ear: a little infant that breeds its teeth, should it lie with thee, would cry out, as if thou wert the more unquiet bed-fellow.
Duch. I am Duchess of Malfy still.'

higher still of nature, and next to that, of books. They are the nearest to our thoughts: they wind into the heart; the poet's verse slides into the current of our blood. We read them when young, we remember them when old. We read there of what has happened to others; we feel that it has happened to ourselves. They are to be had every where cheap and good. We breathe but the air of books: we owe every thing to their authors, on this side barbarism; and we pay them easily with contempt, while living, and with an epitaph, when dead! Michael Angelo is beyond the Alps; Mrs. Siddons has left the stage and us to mourn her loss. Were it not so, there are neither picture-galleries nor theatres-royal on Salisbury-plain, where I write this; but here, even here, with a few old authors, I can manage to get through the summer or the winter months, without ever knowing what it is to feel *ennui*. They sit with me at breakfast; they walk out with me before dinner. After a long walk through unfrequented tracks, after starting the hare from the fern, or hearing the wing of the raven rustling above my head, or being greeted by the woodman's 'stern good-night,' as he strikes into his narrow homeward path, I can 'take mine ease at mine inn,' beside the blazing hearth, and shake hands with Signor Orlando Friscobaldo, as the oldest acquaintance I have. Ben Jonson, learned Chapman, Master Webster, and Master Heywood, are there; and seated round, discourse the silent hours away. Shakespear is there himself, not in Cibber's manager's coat. Spenser is hardly yet returned from a ramble through the woods, or is concealed behind a group of nymphs, fawns, and satyrs. Milton lies on the table, as on an altar, never taken up or laid down without reverence. Lyly's Endymion sleeps with the moon, that shines in at the window; and a breath of wind stirring at a distance seems a sigh from the tree under which he grew old. Faustus disputes in one corner of the room with fiendish faces, and reasons of divine astrology. Bellafront soothes Matheo, Vittoria triumphs over her judges, and old Chapman repeats one of the hymns of Homer, in his own fine translation! I should have no objection to pass my life in this manner out of the world, not thinking of it, nor it of me; neither abused by my enemies, nor defended by my friends; careless of the future, but sometimes dreaming of the past, which might as well be forgotten! Mr. Wordsworth has expressed this sentiment well (perhaps I have borrowed it from him)—

'Books, dreams, are both a world; and books, we know,
Are a substantial world, both pure and good,
Round which, with tendrils strong as flesh and blood,
Our pastime and our happiness may grow.
* * * * * * *

Two let me mention dearer than the rest,
The gentle lady wedded to the Moor,
And heavenly Una with her milk-white lamb.

Blessings be with them and eternal praise,
The poets, who on earth have made us heirs
Of truth and pure delight in deathless lays.
Oh, might my name be number'd among theirs,
Then gladly would I end my mortal days!'

I have no sort of pretension to join in the concluding wish of the last stanza; but I trust the writer feels that this aspiration of his early and highest ambition is already not unfulfilled!

LECTURE IV

ON BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER, BEN JONSON, FORD, AND MASSINGER.

Beaumont and Fletcher, with all their prodigious merits, appear to me the first writers who in some measure departed from the genuine tragic style of the age of Shakespear. They thought less of their subject, and more of themselves, than some others. They had a great and unquestioned command over the stores both of fancy and passion; but they availed themselves too often of common-place extravagances and theatrical trick. Men at first produce effect by studying nature, and afterwards they look at nature only to produce effect. It is the same in the history of other arts, and of other periods of literature. With respect to most of the writers of this age, their subject was their master. Shakespear was alone, as I have said before, master of his subject; but Beaumont and Fletcher were the first who made a play-thing of it, or a convenient vehicle for the display of their own powers. The example of preceding or contemporary writers had given them facility; the frequency of dramatic exhibition had advanced the popular taste; and this facility of production, and the necessity for appealing to popular applause, tended to vitiate their own taste, and to make them willing to pamper that of the public for novelty and extraordinary effect. There wants something of the sincerity and modesty of the older writers. They do not wait nature's time, or work out her materials patiently and faithfully, but try to anticipate her, and so far defeat themselves. They would have a catastrophe in every scene; so that you have none at

last: they would raise admiration to its height in every line; so that the impression of the whole is comparatively loose and desultory. They pitch the characters at first in too high a key, and exhaust themselves by the eagerness and impatience of their efforts. We find all the prodigality of youth, the confidence inspired by success, an enthusiasm bordering on extravagance, richness running riot, beauty dissolving in its own sweetness. They are like heirs just come to their estates, like lovers in the honey-moon. In the economy of nature's gifts, they 'misuse the bounteous Pan, and thank the Gods amiss.' Their productions shoot up in haste, but bear the marks of precocity and premature decay. Or they are two goodly trees, the stateliest of the forest, crowned with blossoms, and with the verdure springing at their feet; but they do not strike their roots far enough into the ground, and the fruit can hardly ripen for the flowers!

It cannot be denied that they are lyrical and descriptive poets of the first order; every page of their writings is a *florilegium*: they are dramatic poets of the second class, in point of knowledge, variety, vivacity, and effect; there is hardly a passion, character, or situation, which they have not touched in their devious range, and whatever they touched, they adorned with some new grace or striking feature; they are masters of style and versification in almost every variety of melting modulation or sounding pomp, of which they are capable: in comic wit and spirit, they are scarcely surpassed by any writers of any age. There they are in their element, 'like eagles newly baited'; but I speak rather of their serious poetry;—and this, I apprehend, with all its richness, sweetness, loftiness, and grace, wants something —stimulates more than it gratifies, and leaves the mind in a certain sense exhausted and unsatisfied. Their fault is a too ostentatious and indiscriminate display of power. Every thing seems in a state of fermentation and effervescence, and not to have settled and found its centre in their minds. The ornaments, through neglect or abundance, do not always appear sufficiently appropriate: there is evidently a rich wardrobe of words and images, to set off any sentiments that occur, but not equal felicity in the choice of the sentiments to be expressed; the characters in general do not take a substantial form, or excite a growing interest, or leave a permanent impression; the passion does not accumulate by the force of time, of circumstances, and habit, but wastes itself in the first ebullitions of surprise and novelty.

Besides these more critical objections, there is a too frequent mixture of voluptuous softness or effeminacy of character with horror in the subjects, a conscious weakness (I can hardly think it wantonness) of moral constitution struggling with wilful and violent situations, like the tender wings of the moth, attracted to the flame that dazzles

and consumes it. In the hey-day of their youthful ardour, and the intoxication of their animal spirits, they take a perverse delight in tearing up some rooted sentiment, to make a mawkish lamentation over it; and fondly and gratuitously cast the seeds of crimes into forbidden grounds, to see how they will shoot up and vegetate into luxuriance, to catch the eye of fancy. They are not safe teachers of morality: they tamper with it, like an experiment tried *in corpore vili*; and seem to regard the decomposition of the common affections, and the dissolution of the strict bonds of society, as an agreeable study and a careless pastime. The tone of Shakespear's writings is manly and bracing; theirs is at once insipid and meretricious, in the comparison. Shakespear never disturbs the grounds of moral principle; but leaves his characters (after doing them heaped justice on all sides) to be judged of by our common sense and natural feeling. Beaumont and Fletcher constantly bring in equivocal sentiments and characters, as if to set them up to be debated by sophistical casuistry, or varnished over with the colours of poetical ingenuity. Or Shakespear may be said to 'cast the diseases of the mind, only to restore it to a sound and pristine health': the dramatic paradoxes of Beaumont and Fletcher are, to all appearance, tinctured with an infusion of personal vanity and laxity of principle. I do not say that this was the character of the men; but it strikes me as the character of their minds. The two things are very distinct. The greatest purists (hypocrisy apart) are often free-livers; and some of the most unguarded professors of a general license of behaviour, have been the last persons to take the benefit of their own doctrine, from which they reap nothing, but the obloquy and the pleasure of startling their 'wonder-wounded' hearers. There is a division of labour, even in vice. Some persons addict themselves to the speculation only, others to the practice. The peccant humours of the body or the mind break out in different ways. One man *sows his wild oats* in his neighbour's field: another on Mount Parnassus; from whence, borne on the breath of fame, they may hope to spread and fructify to distant times and regions. Of the latter class were our poets, who, I believe, led unexceptionable lives, and only indulged their imaginations in occasional unwarrantable liberties with the Muses. What makes them more inexcusable, and confirms this charge against them, is, that they are always abusing 'wanton poets,' as if willing to shift suspicion from themselves.

Beaumont and Fletcher were the first also who laid the foundation of the artificial diction and tinselled pomp of the next generation of poets, by aiming at a profusion of ambitious ornaments, and by translating the commonest circumstances into the language of metaphor and passion. It is this misplaced and inordinate craving after striking

effect and continual excitement that had at one time rendered our poetry the most vapid of all things, by not leaving the moulds of poetic diction to be filled up by the overflowings of nature and passion, but by swelling out ordinary and unmeaning topics to certain preconceived and indispensable standards of poetical elevation and grandeur. —I shall endeavour to confirm this praise, mixed with unwilling blame, by remarking on a few of their principal tragedies. If I have done them injustice, the resplendent passages I have to quote will set every thing to rights.

The Maid's Tragedy is one of the poorest. The nature of the distress is of the most disagreeable and repulsive kind; and not the less so, because it is entirely improbable and uncalled-for. There is no sort of reason, or no sufficient reason to the reader's mind, why the king should marry off his mistress to one of his courtiers, why he should pitch upon the worthiest for this purpose, why he should, by such a choice, break off Amintor's match with the sister of another principal support of his throne (whose death is the consequence), why he should insist on the inviolable fidelity of his former mistress to him after she is married, and why her husband should thus inevitably be made acquainted with his dishonour, and roused to madness and revenge, except the mere love of mischief, and gratuitous delight in torturing the feelings of others, and tempting one's own fate. The character of Evadne, however, her naked, unblushing impudence, the mixture of folly with vice, her utter insensibility to any motive but her own pride and inclination, her heroic superiority to any signs of shame or scruples of conscience from a recollection of what is due to herself or others, are well described; and the lady is true to herself in her repentance, which is owing to nothing but the accidental impulse and whim of the moment. The deliberate voluntary disregard of all moral ties and all pretence to virtue, in the structure of the fable, is nearly unaccountable. Amintor (who is meant to be the hero of the piece) is a feeble, irresolute character: his slavish, recanting loyalty to his prince, who has betrayed and dishonoured him, is of a piece with the tyranny and insolence of which he is made the sport; and even his tardy revenge is snatched from his hands, and he kills his former betrothed and beloved mistress, instead of executing vengeance on the man who has destroyed his peace of mind and unsettled her intellects. The king, however, meets his fate from the penitent fury of Evadne; and on this account, the Maid's Tragedy was forbidden to be acted in the reign of Charles II. as countenancing the doctrine of regicide. Aspatia is a beautiful sketch of resigned and heart-broken melancholy; and Calianax, a blunt, satirical courtier, is a character of much humour

and novelty. There are striking passages here and there, but fewer than in almost any of their plays. Amintor's speech to Evadne, when she makes confession of her unlooked-for remorse, is, I think, the finest.

> ——'Do not mock me:
> Though I am tame, and bred up with my wrongs,
> Which are my foster-brothers, I may leap,
> Like a hand-wolf, into my natural wildness,
> And do an outrage. Prithee, do not mock me!'

King and No King, which is on a strangely chosen subject as strangely treated, is very superior in power and effect. There is an unexpected reservation in the plot, which, in some measure, relieves the painfulness of the impression. Arbaces is painted in gorgeous, but not alluring colours. His vain-glorious pretensions and impatience of contradiction are admirably displayed, and are so managed as to produce an involuntary comic effect to temper the lofty tone of tragedy, particularly in the scenes in which he affects to treat his vanquished enemy with such condescending kindness; and perhaps this display of upstart pride was meant by the authors as an oblique satire on his low origin, which is afterwards discovered. His pride of self-will and fierce impetuosity, are the same in war and in love. The haughty voluptuousness and pampered effeminacy of his character admit neither respect for his misfortunes, nor pity for his errors. His ambition is a fever in the blood; and his love is a sudden transport of ungovernable caprice that brooks no restraint, and is intoxicated with the lust of power, even in the lap of pleasure, and the sanctuary of the affections. The passion of Panthea is, as it were, a reflection from, and lighted at the shrine of her lover's flagrant vanity. In the elevation of his rank, and in the consciousness of his personal accomplishments, he seems firmly persuaded (and by sympathy to persuade others) that there is nothing in the world which can be an object of liking or admiration but himself. The first birth and declaration of this perverted sentiment to himself, when he meets with Panthea after his return from conquest, fostered by his presumptuous infatuation and the heat of his inflammable passions, and the fierce and lordly tone in which he repels the suggestion of the natural obstacles to his sudden phrenzy, are in Beaumont and Fletcher's most daring manner: but the rest is not equal. What may be called the love-scenes are equally gross and commonplace; and instead of any thing like delicacy or a struggle of different feelings, have all the indecency and familiarity of a brothel. Bessus, a comic character in this play, is a swaggering coward, something between Parolles and Falstaff.

The False One is an indirect imitation of Antony and Cleopatra. We have Septimius for Œnobarbas and Cæsar for Antony. Cleopatra herself is represented in her girlish state, but she is made divine in

'Youth that opens like perpetual spring,'

and promises the rich harvest of love and pleasure that succeeds it. Her first presenting herself before Cæsar, when she is brought in by Sceva, and the impression she makes upon him, like a vision dropt from the clouds, or

'Like some celestial sweetness, the treasure of soft love.'

are exquisitely conceived. Photinus is an accomplished villain, well-read in crooked policy and quirks of state; and the description of Pompey has a solemnity and grandeur worthy of his unfortunate end. Septimius says, bringing in his lifeless head,

''Tis here, 'tis done! Behold, you fearful viewers,
Shake, and behold the model of the world here,
The pride and strength! Look, look again, 'tis finished!
That that whole armies, nay, whole nations,
Many and mighty kings, have been struck blind at,
And fled before, wing'd with their fear and terrors,
That steel War waited on, and Fortune courted,
That high-plum'd Honour built up for her own;
Behold that mightiness, behold that fierceness,
Behold that child of war, with all his glories,
By this poor hand made breathless!'

And again Cæsar says of him, who was his mortal enemy (it was not held the fashion in those days, nor will it be held so in time to come, to lampoon those whom you have vanquished)—

——' Oh thou conqueror,
Thou glory of the world once, now the pity,
Thou awe of nations, wherefore didst thou fall thus?
What poor fate followed thee, and plucked thee on
To trust thy sacred life to an Egyptian?
The life and light of Rome to a blind stranger,
That honourable war ne'er taught a nobleness,
Not worthy circumstance shew'd what a man was?
That never heard thy name sung but in banquets,
And loose lascivious pleasures? to a boy,
That had no faith to comprehend thy greatness,
No study of thy life to know thy goodness?
Egyptians, do you think your highest pyramids,
Built to outdure the sun, as you suppose,
Where your unworthy kings lie raked in ashes,
Are monuments fit for him! No, brood of Nilus,

> Nothing can cover his high fame but heaven;
> No pyramids set off his memories,
> But the eternal substance of his greatness,
> To which I leave him.'

It is something worth living for, to write or even read such poetry as this is, or to know that it has been written, or that there have been subjects on which to write it!—This, of all Beaumont and Fletcher's plays, comes the nearest in style and manner to Shakespear, not excepting the first act of the Two Noble Kinsmen, which has been sometimes attributed to him.

The FAITHFUL SHEPHERDESS by Fletcher alone, is 'a perpetual feast of nectar'd sweets, where no crude surfeit reigns.' The author has in it given a loose to his fancy, and his fancy was his most delightful and genial quality, where, to use his own words,

> 'He takes most ease, and grows ambitious
> Thro' his own wanton fire and pride delicious.'

The songs and lyrical descriptions throughout are luxuriant and delicate in a high degree. He came near to Spenser in a certain tender and voluptuous sense of natural beauty; he came near to Shakespear in the playful and fantastic expression of it. The whole composition is an exquisite union of dramatic and pastoral poetry; where the local descriptions receive a tincture from the sentiments and purposes of the speaker, and each character, cradled in the lap of nature, paints 'her virgin fancies wild' with romantic grace and classic elegance.

The place and its employments are thus described by Chloe to Thenot:

> ——'Here be woods as green
> As any, air likewise as fresh and sweet
> As where smooth Zephyrus plays on the fleet
> Face of the curled stream, with flow'rs as many
> As the young spring gives, and as choice as any;
> Here be all new delights, cool streams and wells,
> Arbours o'ergrown with woodbine; caves, and dells;
> Chuse where thou wilt, while I sit by and sing,
> Or gather rushes, to make many a ring
> For thy long fingers; tell thee tales of love,
> How the pale Phœbe, hunting in a grove,
> First saw the boy Endymion, from whose eyes
> She took eternal fire that never dies;
> How she conveyed him softly in a sleep,
> His temples bound with poppy, to the steep

Head of old Latmos, where she stoops each night,
Gilding the mountain with her brother's light,
To kiss her sweetest.'

There are few things that can surpass in truth and beauty of allegorical description, the invocation of Amaryllis to the God of Shepherds, Pan, to save her from the violence of the Sullen Shepherd, for Syrinx' sake:

——'For her dear sake,
That loves the rivers' brinks, and still doth shake
In cold remembrance of thy quick pursuit!'

Or again, the friendly Satyr promises Clorin—

'Brightest, if there be remaining
Any service, without feigning
I will do it; were I set
To catch the nimble wind, or get
Shadows gliding on the green.'

It would be a task no less difficult than this, to follow the flight of the poet's Muse, or catch her fleeting graces, fluttering her golden wings, and singing in notes angelical of youth, of love, and joy!

There is only one affected and ridiculous character in this drama, that of Thenot in love with Clorin. He is attached to her for her inviolable fidelity to her buried husband, and wishes her not to grant his suit, lest it should put an end to his passion. Thus he pleads to her against himself:

——'If you yield, I die
To all affection; 'tis that loyalty
You tie unto this grave I so admire;
And yet there's something else I would desire,
If you would hear me, but withal deny.
Oh Pan, what an uncertain destiny
Hangs over all my hopes! I will retire;
For if I longer stay, this double fire
Will lick my life up.'

This is paltry quibbling. It is spurious logic, not genuine feeling. A pedant may hang his affections on the point of a dilemma in this manner; but nature does not sophisticate; or when she does, it is to gain her ends, not to defeat them.

The Sullen Shepherd turns out too dark a character in the end, and gives a shock to the gentle and pleasing sentiments inspired throughout.

The resemblance of Comus to this poem is not so great as has

been sometimes contended, nor are the particular allusions important or frequent. Whatever Milton copied, he made his own. In reading the Faithful Shepherdess, we find ourselves breathing the moonlight air under the cope of heaven, and wander by forest side or fountain, among fresh dews and flowers, following our vagrant fancies, or smit with the love of nature's works. In reading Milton's Comus, and most of his other works, we seem to be entering a lofty dome raised over our heads and ascending to the skies, and as if nature and every thing in it were but a temple and an image consecrated by the poet's art to the worship of virtue and pure religion. The speech of Clorin, after she has been alarmed by the Satyr, is the only one of which Milton has made a free use.

'And all my fears go with thee,
What greatness or what private hidden power
Is there in me to draw submission
From this rude man and beast? Sure I am mortal:
The daughter of a shepherd; he was mortal,
And she that bore me mortal: prick my hand,
And it will bleed; a fever shakes me, and
The self-same wind that makes the young lambs shrink,
Makes me a-cold: my fear says, I am mortal.
Yet I have heard, (my mother told it me,
And now I do believe it), if I keep
My virgin flow'r uncropt, pure, chaste, and fair,
No goblin, wood-god, fairy, elf, or fiend,
Satyr, or other power that haunts the groves,
Shall hurt my body, or by vain illusion
Draw me to wander after idle fires;
Or voices calling me in dead of night
To make me follow, and so tole me on
Thro' mire and standing pools to find my ruin;
Else, why should this rough thing, who never knew
Manners, nor smooth humanity, whose heats
Are rougher than himself, and more mishapen,
Thus mildly kneel to me? Sure there 's a pow'r
In that great name of Virgin, that binds fast
All rude uncivil bloods, all appetites
That break their confines: then, strong Chastity,
Be thou my strongest guard, for here I'll dwell,
In opposition against fate and hell!'

Ben Jonson's Sad Shepherd comes nearer it in style and spirit, but still with essential differences, like the two men, and without any appearance of obligation. Ben's is more homely and grotesque, Fletcher's is more visionary and fantastical. I hardly know which to prefer. If Fletcher has the advantage in general power and

sentiment, Jonson is superior in *naiveté* and truth of local colouring.

The Two Noble Kinsmen is another monument of Fletcher's genius; and it is said also of Shakespear's. The style of the first act has certainly more weight, more abruptness, and more involution, than the general style of Fletcher, with fewer softenings and fillings-up to sheathe the rough projecting points and piece the disjointed fragments together. For example, the compliment of Theseus to one of the Queens, that Hercules

> 'Tumbled him down upon his Nemean hide,
> And swore his sinews thaw'd'

at sight of her beauty, is in a bolder and more masculine vein than Fletcher usually aimed at. Again, the supplicating address of the distressed Queen to Hippolita,

> ——'Lend us a knee:
> But touch the ground for us no longer time
> Than a dove's motion, when the head 's pluck'd off'—

is certainly in the manner of Shakespear, with his subtlety and strength of illustration. But, on the other hand, in what immediately follows, relating to their husbands left dead in the field of battle,

> 'Tell him if he i' th' blood-siz'd field lay swoln,
> Shewing the sun his teeth, grinning at the moon,
> What you would do'—

I think we perceive the extravagance of Beaumont and Fletcher, not contented with truth or strength of description, but hurried away by the love of violent excitement into an image of disgust and horror, not called for, and not at all proper in the mouth into which it is put. There is a studied exaggeration of the sentiment, and an evident imitation of the parenthetical interruptions and breaks in the line, corresponding to what we sometimes meet in Shakespear, as in the speeches of Leontes in the Winter's Tale; but the sentiment is overdone, and the style merely mechanical. Thus Hippolita declares, on her lord's going to the wars,

> 'We have been soldiers, and we cannot weep,
> When our friends don their helms, or put to sea,
> Or tell of babes broach'd on the lance, or women
> That have seethed their infants in (and after eat them)
> The brine they wept at killing 'em; then if
> You stay to see of us such spinsters, we
> Should hold you here forever.'

One might apply to this sort of poetry what Marvel says of some sort of passions, that it is

> 'Tearing our pleasures with rough strife
> Thorough the iron gates of life.'

It is not in the true spirit of Shakespear, who was 'born only heir to all humanity,' whose horrors were not gratuitous, and who did not harrow up the feelings for the sake of making mere *bravura* speeches. There are also in this first act, several repetitions of Shakespear's phraseology: a thing that seldom or never occurs in his own works. For instance,

> ——'Past slightly
> *His careless execution*'—
>
> '*The very lees* of such, millions of rates
> Exceed *the wine* of others'—
>
> ——'Let *the event*,
> That *never-erring arbitrator*, tell us'—
>
> 'Like *old importment's bastard*'—

There are also words that are never used by Shakespear in a similar sense:

> ——'All our surgeons
> *Convent* in their behoof'—
>
> 'We *convent* nought else but woes'—

In short, it appears to me that the first part of this play was written in imitation of Shakespear's manner; but I see no reason to suppose that it was his, but the common tradition, which is however by no means well established. The subsequent acts are confessedly Fletcher's, and the imitations of Shakespear which occur there (not of Shakespear's manner as differing from his, but as it was congenial to his own spirit and feeling of nature) are glorious in themselves, and exalt our idea of the great original which could give birth to such magnificent conceptions in another. The conversation of Palamon and Arcite in prison is of this description—the outline is evidently taken from that of Guiderius, Arviragus, and Bellarius in Cymbeline, but filled up with a rich profusion of graces that make it his own again.

> '*Pal.* How do you, noble cousin?
> *Arc.* How do you, Sir?
> *Pal.* Why, strong enough to laugh at misery,
> And bear the chance of war yet. We are prisoners,
> I fear for ever, cousin.

Arc. I believe it;
And to that destiny have patiently
Laid up my hour to come.
Pal. Oh, cousin Arcite,
Where is Thebes now? where is our noble country?
Where are our friends and kindreds? Never more
Must we behold those comforts; never see
The hardy youths strive for the games of honour,
Hung with the painted favours of their ladies,
Like tall ships under sail: then start amongst 'em,
And as an east wind, leave 'em all behind us
Like lazy clouds, whilst Palamon and Arcite,
Even in the wagging of a wanton leg,
Outstript the people's praises, won the garlands,
Ere they have time to wish 'em ours. Oh, never
Shall we two exercise, like twins of honour,
Our arms again, and feel our fiery horses,
Like proud seas under us! Our good swords now
(Better the red-eyed God of war ne'er wore)
Ravish'd our sides, like age, must run to rust,
And deck the temples of those Gods that hate us:
These hands shall never draw 'em out like lightning,
To blast whole armies more.
Arc. No, Palamon,
Those hopes are prisoners with us: here we are,
And here the graces of our youth must wither,
Like a too-timely spring: here age must find us,
And which is heaviest, Palamon, unmarried;
The sweet embraces of a loving wife
Loaden with kisses, arm'd with thousand Cupids,
Shall never clasp our necks! No issue know us,
No figures of ourselves shall we e'er see,
To glad our age, and like young eaglets teach 'em
Boldly to gaze against bright arms, and say,
Remember what your fathers were, and conquer!
The fair-eyed maids shall weep our banishments,
And in their songs curse ever-blinded fortune,
Till she for shame see what a wrong she has done
To youth and nature. This is all our world:
We shall know nothing here, but one another;
Hear nothing but the clock that tells our woes;
The vine shall grow, but we shall never see it;
Summer shall come, and with her all delights,
But dead-cold winter must inhabit here still.
Pal. 'Tis too true, Arcite! To our Theban hounds,
That shook the aged forest with their echoes,
No more now must we halloo; no more shake
Our pointed javelins, while the angry swine
Flies like a Parthian quiver from our rages,

Struck with our well-steel'd darts! All valiant uses
(The food and nourishment of noble minds)
In us two here shall perish; we shall die
(Which is the curse of honour) lazily,
Children of grief and ignorance.
Arc. Yet, cousin,
Even from the bottom of these miseries,
From all that fortune can inflict upon us,
I see two comforts rising, two mere blessings,
If the Gods please to hold here; a brave patience,
And the enjoying of our griefs together.
Whilst Palamon is with me, let me perish
If I think this our prison!
Pal. Certainly,
'Tis a main goodness, cousin, that our fortunes
Were twinn'd together; 'tis most true, two souls
Put in two noble bodies, let 'em suffer
The gall of hazard, so they grow together,
Will never sink; they must not; say they could,
A willing man dies sleeping, and all 's done.
Arc. Shall we make worthy uses of this place,
That all men hate so much?
Pal. How, gentle cousin?
Arc. Let 's think this prison a holy sanctuary
To keep us from corruption of worse men!
We're young, and yet desire the ways of honour:
That, liberty and common conversation,
The poison of pure spirits, might, like women,
Woo us to wander from. What worthy blessing
Can be, but our imaginations
May make it ours? And here, being thus together,
We are an endless mine to one another;
We're father, friends, acquaintance;
We are, in one another, families;
I am your heir, and you are mine; this place
Is our inheritance; no hard oppressor
Dare take this from us; here, with a little patience,
We shall live long, and loving; no surfeits seek us:
The hand of war hurts none here, nor the seas
Swallow their youth; were we at liberty,
A wife might part us lawfully, or business;
Quarrels consume us; envy of ill men
Crave our acquaintance; I might sicken, cousin,
Where you should never know it, and so perish
Without your noble hand to close mine eyes,
Or prayers to the Gods: a thousand chances,
Were we from hence, would sever us.
Pal. You have made me
(I thank you, cousin Arcite) almost wanton

With my captivity; what a misery
It is to live abroad, and every where!
'Tis like a beast, methinks! I find the court here,
I'm sure a more content; and all those pleasures,
That woo the wills of men to vanity,
I see thro' now: and am sufficient
To tell the world, 'tis but a gaudy shadow
That old time, as he passes by, takes with him.
What had we been, old in the court of Creon,
Where sin is justice, lust and ignorance
The virtues of the great ones? Cousin Arcite,
Had not the loving Gods found this place for us,
We had died as they do, ill old men unwept,
And had their epitaphs, the people's curses!
Shall I say more?
Arc. I would hear you still.
Pal. You shall.
Is there record of any two that lov'd
Better than we do, Arcite?
Arc. Sure there cannot.
Pal. I do not think it possible our friendship
Should ever leave us.
Arc. Till our deaths it cannot.'

Thus they 'sing their bondage freely:' but just then enters Æmilia, who parts all this friendship between them, and turns them to deadliest foes.

The jailor's daughter, who falls in love with Palamon, and goes mad, is a wretched interpolation in the story, and a fantastic copy of Ophelia. But they readily availed themselves of all the dramatic common-places to be found in Shakespear, love, madness, processions, sports, imprisonment, &c. and copied him too often in earnest, to have a right to parody him, as they sometimes did, in jest.—The story of the Two Noble Kinsmen is taken from Chaucer's Palamon and Arcite; but the latter part, which in Chaucer is full of dramatic power and interest, degenerates in the play into a mere narrative of the principal events, and possesses little value or effect.—It is not improbable that Beaumont and Fletcher's having dramatised this story, put Dryden upon modernising it.

I cannot go through all Beaumont and Fletcher's dramas (52 in number), but I have mentioned some of the principal, and the excellences and defects of the rest may be judged of from these. The Bloody Brother, A Wife for a Month, Bonduca, Thierry and Theodoret, are among the best of their tragedies: among the comedies, the Night Walker, the Little French Lawyer, and Monsieur Thomas, come perhaps next to the Chances, the Wild Goose Chase, and Rule

a Wife and Have a Wife.—Philaster, or Love lies a Bleeding, is one of the most admirable productions of these authors (the last I shall mention); and the patience of Euphrasia, disguised as Bellario, the tenderness of Arethusa, and the jealousy of Philaster, are beyond all praise. The passages of extreme romantic beauty and high-wrought passion that I might quote, are out of number. One only must suffice, the account of the commencement of Euphrasia's love to Philaster.

——'Sitting in my window,
Printing my thoughts in lawn, I saw a God
I thought (but it was you) enter our gates;
My blood flew out, and back again as fast
As I had puffed it forth and suck'd it in
Like breath; then was I called away in haste
To entertain you. Never was a man
Heav'd from a sheep-cote to a sceptre, rais'd
So high in thoughts as I: you left a kiss
Upon these lips then, which I mean to keep
From you forever. I did hear you talk
Far above singing!'

And so it is our poets themselves write, 'far above singing.'[1] I am loth to part with them, and wander down, as we now must,

'Into a lower world, to theirs obscure
And wild—To breathe in other air
Less pure, accustomed to immortal fruits.'

Ben Jonson's serious productions are, in my opinion, superior to his comic ones. What he does, is the result of strong sense and painful industry; but sense and industry agree better with the grave and severe, than with the light and gay productions of the Muse. 'His plays were works,' as some one said of them, 'while others' works were plays.' The observation had less of compliment than of truth in it. He may be said to mine his way into a subject, like a mole, and throws up a prodigious quantity of matter on the surface, so that the richer the soil in which he labours, the less dross and rubbish we have. His fault is, that he sets himself too much to his subject, and cannot let go his hold of an idea, after the insisting on it becomes tiresome or painful to others. But his tenaciousness of what is grand and lofty, is more praiseworthy than his delight in

[1] Euphrasia as the Page, just before speaking of her life, which Philaster threatens to take from her, says,

——''Tis not a life;
'Tis but a piece of childhood thrown away.'

What exquisite beauty and delicacy!

what is low and disagreeable. His pedantry accords better with didactic pomp than with illiterate and vulgar gabble; his learning engrafted on romantic tradition or classical history, looks like genius.

'*Miraturque novas frondes et non sua poma.*'

He was equal, by an effort, to the highest things, and took the same, and even more successful pains to grovel to the lowest. He raised himself up or let himself down to the level of his subject, by ponderous machinery. By dint of application, and a certain strength of nerve, he could do justice to Tacitus and Sallust no less than to mine Host of the New Inn. His tragedy of the Fall of Sejanus, in particular, is an admirable piece of ancient mosaic. The principal character gives one the idea of a lofty column of solid granite, nodding to its base from its pernicious height, and dashed in pieces, by a breath of air, a word of its creator—feared, not pitied, scorned, unwept, and forgotten. The depth of knowledge and gravity of expression sustain one another throughout: the poet has worked out the historian's outline, so that the vices and passions, the ambition and servility of public men, in the heated and poisoned atmosphere of a luxurious and despotic court, were never described in fuller or more glowing colours.—I am half afraid to give any extracts, lest they should be tortured into an application to other times and characters than those referred to by the poet. Some of the sounds, indeed, may bear (for what I know), an awkward construction: some of the objects may look double to squint-eyed suspicion. But that is not my fault. It only proves, that the characters of prophet and poet are implied in each other; that he who describes human nature well once, describes it for good and all, as it was, is, and I begin to fear, will ever be. Truth always was, and must always remain a libel to the tyrant and the slave. Thus Satrius Secundus and Pinnarius Natta, two public informers in those days, are described as

'Two of Sejanus' blood-hounds, whom he breeds
With human flesh, to bay at citizens.'

But Rufus, another of the same well-bred gang, debating the point of his own character with two Senators whom he has entrapped, boldly asserts, in a more courtly strain,

'——To be a spy on traitors,
Is honourable vigilance.'

This sentiment of the respectability of the employment of a government spy, which had slept in Tacitus for near two thousand

years, has not been without its modern patrons. The effects of such 'honourable vigilance' are very finely exposed in the following high-spirited dialogue between Lepidus and Arruntius, two noble Romans, who loved their country, but were not fashionable enough to confound their country with its oppressors, and the extinguishers of its liberty.

'*Arr.* What are thy arts (good patriot, teach them me)
That have preserv'd thy hairs to this white dye,
And kept so reverend and so dear a head
Safe on his comely shoulders?
Lep. Arts, Arruntius!
None but the plain and passive fortitude
To suffer and be silent; never stretch
These arms against the torrent; live at home,
With my own thoughts and innocence about me,
Not tempting the wolves' jaws: these are my arts.
Arr. I would begin to study 'em, if I thought
They would secure me. May I pray to Jove
In secret, and be safe? aye, or aloud?
With open wishes? so I do not mention
Tiberius or Sejanus? Yes, I must,
If I speak out. 'Tis hard, that. May I think,
And not be rack'd? What danger is't to dream?
Talk in one's sleep, or cough! Who knows the law?
May I shake my head without a comment? Say
It rains, or it holds up, and not be thrown
Upon the Gemonies? These now are things,
Whereon men's fortunes, yea, their fate depends:
Nothing hath privilege 'gainst the violent ear.
No place, no day, no hour (we see) is free
(Not our religious and most sacred times)
From some one kind of cruelty; all matter,
Nay, all occasion pleaseth. Madman's rage,
The idleness of drunkards, women's nothing,
Jesters' simplicity, all, all is good
That can be catch'd at.'

'Tis a pretty picture; and the duplicates of it, though multiplied without end, are seldom out of request.

The following portrait of a prince besieged by flatterers (taken from Tiberius) has unrivalled force and beauty, with historic truth.

——'If this man
Had but a mind allied unto his words,
How blest a fate were it to us, and Rome?
Men are deceived, who think there can be thrall

Under a virtuous prince. Wish'd liberty
Ne'er lovelier looks than under such a crown.
But when his grace is merely but lip-good,
And that, no longer than he airs himself
Abroad in public, there to seem to shun
The strokes and stripes of flatterers, which within
Are lechery unto him, and so feed
His brutish sense with their afflicting sound,
As (dead to virtue) he permits himself
Be carried like a pitcher by the ears
To every act of vice; this is a case
Deserves our fear, and doth presage the nigh
And close approach of bloody tyranny.
Flattery is midwife unto princes' rage:
And nothing sooner doth help forth a tyrant
Than that, and whisperers' grace, that have the time,
The place, the power, to make all men offenders!'

The only part of this play in which Ben Jonson has completely forgotten himself, (or rather seems not to have done so), is in the conversations between Livia and Eudemus, about a wash for her face, here called a *fucus*, to appear before Sejanus. Catiline's Conspiracy does not furnish by any means an equal number of striking passages, and is spun out to an excessive length with Cicero's artificial and affected orations against Catiline, and in praise of himself. His apologies for his own eloquence, and declarations that in all his art he uses no art at all, put one in mind of Polonius's circuitous way of coming to the point. Both these tragedies, it might be observed, are constructed on the exact principles of a French historical picture, where every head and figure is borrowed from the antique; but somehow, the precious materials of old Roman history and character are better preserved in Jonson's page than on David's canvas.

Two of the most poetical passages in Ben Jonson, are the description of Echo in Cynthia's Revels, and the fine comparison of the mind to a temple, in the New Inn; a play which, on the whole, however, I can read with no patience.

I must hasten to conclude this Lecture with some account of Massinger and Ford, who wrote in the time of Charles I. I am sorry I cannot do it *con amore*. The writers of whom I have chiefly had to speak were true poets, impassioned, fanciful, 'musical as is Apollo's lute;' but Massinger is harsh and crabbed, Ford finical and fastidious. I find little in the works of these two dramatists, but a display of great strength and subtlety of understanding, inveteracy of purpose, and perversity of will. This is not exactly what

we look for in poetry, which, according to the most approved recipes, should combine pleasure with profit, and not owe all its fascination over the mind to its power of shocking or perplexing us. The Muses should attract by grace or dignity of mien. Massinger makes an impression by hardness and repulsiveness of manner. In the intellectual processes which he delights to describe, 'reason panders will:' he fixes arbitrarily on some object which there is no motive to pursue, or every motive combined against it, and then by screwing up his heroes or heroines to the deliberate and blind accomplishment of this, thinks to arrive at 'the true pathos and sublime of human life.' That is not the way. He seldom touches the heart or kindles the fancy. It is in vain to hope to excite much sympathy with convulsive efforts of the will, or intricate contrivances of the understanding, to obtain that which is better left alone, and where the interest arises principally from the conflict between the absurdity of the passion and the obstinacy with which it is persisted in. For the most part, his villains are a sort of *lusus naturæ*; his impassioned characters are like drunkards or madmen. Their conduct is extreme and outrageous, their motives unaccountable and weak; their misfortunes are without necessity, and their crimes without temptation, to ordinary apprehensions. I do not say that this is invariably the case in all Massinger's scenes, but I think it will be found that a principle of playing at cross-purposes is the ruling passion throughout most of them. This is the case in the tragedy of the Unnatural Combat, in the Picture, the Duke of Milan, A New Way to Pay Old Debts, and even in the Bondman, and the Virgin Martyr, &c. In the Picture, Matthias nearly loses his wife's affections, by resorting to the far-fetched and unnecessary device of procuring a magical portrait to read the slightest variation in her thoughts. In the same play, Honoria risks her reputation and her life to gain a clandestine interview with Matthias, merely to shake his fidelity to his wife, and when she has gained her object, tells the king her husband in pure caprice and fickleness of purpose. The Virgin Martyr is nothing but a tissue of instantaneous conversions to and from Paganism and Christianity. The only scenes of any real beauty and tenderness in this play, are those between Dorothea and Angelo, her supposed friendless beggar-boy, but her guardian angel in disguise, which are understood to be by Deckar. The interest of the Bondman turns upon two different acts of penance and self-denial, in the persons of the hero and heroine, Pisander and Cleora. In the Duke of Milan (the most poetical of Massinger's productions), Sforza's resolution to destroy his wife, rather than bear the thought of her surviving him, is as much out of the verge of nature and probability, as it is unexpected and revolt-

ing, from the want of any circumstances of palliation leading to it. It stands out alone, a pure piece of voluntary atrocity, which seems not the dictate of passion, but a start of phrensy; as cold-blooded in the execution as it is extravagant in the conception.

Again, Francesco, in this play, is a person whose actions we are at a loss to explain till the conclusion of the piece, when the attempt to account for them from motives originally amiable and generous, only produces a double sense of incongruity, and instead of satisfying the mind, renders it totally incredulous. He endeavours to seduce the wife of his benefactor, he then (failing) attempts her death, slanders her foully, and wantonly causes her to be slain by the hand of her husband, and has him poisoned by a nefarious stratagem, and all this to appease a high sense of injured honour, that 'felt a stain like a wound,' and from the tender overflowings of fraternal affection, his sister having, it appears, been formerly betrothed to, and afterwards deserted by, the Duke of Milan. Sir Giles Overreach is the most successful and striking effort of Massinger's pen, and the best known to the reader, but it will hardly be thought to form an exception to the tenour of the above remarks.[1] The same spirit of

[1] The following criticism on this play has appeared in another publication, but may be not improperly inserted here:

'A New Way to Pay Old Debts is certainly a very admirable play, and highly characteristic of the genius of its author, which was hard and forcible, and calculated rather to produce a strong impression than a pleasing one. There is considerable unity of design and a progressive interest in the fable, though the artifice by which the catastrophe is brought about, (the double assumption of the character of favoured lovers by Wellborn and Lovell), is somewhat improbable, and out of date; and the moral is peculiarly striking, because its whole weight falls upon one who all along prides himself in setting every principle of justice and all fear of consequences at defiance.

'The character of Sir Giles Overreach (the most prominent feature of the play, whether in the perusal, or as it is acted) interests us less by exciting our sympathy than our indignation. We hate him very heartily, and yet not enough; for he has strong, robust points about him that repel the impertinence of censure, and he sometimes succeeds in making us stagger in our opinion of his conduct, by throwing off any idle doubts or scruples that might hang upon it in his own mind, 'like dew-drops from the lion's mane.' His steadiness of purpose scarcely stands in need of support from the common sanctions of morality, which he intrepidly breaks through, and he almost conquers our prejudices by the consistent and determined manner in which he braves them. Self-interest is his idol, and he makes no secret of his idolatry: he is only a more devoted and unblushing worshipper at this shrine than other men. Self-will is the only rule of his conduct, to which he makes every other feeling bend: or rather, from the nature of his constitution, he has no sickly, sentimental obstacles to interrupt him in his headstrong career. He is a character of obdurate self-will, without fanciful notions or natural affections; one who has no regard to the feelings of others, and who professes an equal disregard to their opinions. He minds nothing but his own ends, and takes the shortest and surest way to them. His understanding is clear-sighted,

caprice and sullenness survives in Rowe's Fair Penitent, taken from this author's Fatal Dowry.

Ford is not so great a favourite with me as with some others, from whose judgment I dissent with diffidence. It has been lamented that the play of his which has been most admired ('Tis Pity She's a Whore) had not a less exceptionable subject. I do not know, but I suspect that the exceptionableness of the subject is that which constitutes the chief merit of the play. The repulsiveness of the story is what gives it its critical interest; for it is a studiously prosaic statement of facts, and naked declaration of passions. It was not the least of Shakespear's praise, that he never tampered with unfair subjects. His genius was above it; his taste kept aloof from it. I do not deny the power of simple painting and polished style in

and his passions strong-nerved. Sir Giles is no flincher, and no hypocrite; and he gains almost as much by the hardihood with which he avows his impudent and sordid designs as others do by their caution in concealing them. He is the demon of selfishness personified; and carves out his way to the objects of his unprincipled avarice and ambition with an arm of steel, that strikes but does not feel the blow it inflicts. The character of calculating, systematic self-love, as the master-key to all his actions, is preserved with great truth of keeping and in the most trifling circumstances. Thus ruminating to himself he says, "I'll walk, to get me an appetite: 'tis but a mile; and exercise will keep me from being pursy!"—Yet to show the absurdity and impossibility of a man's being governed by any such pretended exclusive regard to his own interest, this very Sir Giles, who laughs at conscience, and scorns opinion, who ridicules every thing as fantastical but wealth, solid, substantial wealth, and boasts of himself as having been the founder of his own fortune, by his contempt for every other consideration, is ready to sacrifice the whole of his enormous possessions—to what?—to a title, a sound, to make his daughter "right honourable," the wife of a lord whose name he cannot repeat without loathing, and in the end he becomes the dupe of, and falls a victim to, that very opinion of the world which he despises!

The character of Sir Giles Overreach has been found fault with as unnatural; and it may, perhaps, in the present refinement of our manners, have become in a great measure obsolete. But we doubt whether even still, in remote and insulated parts of the country, sufficient traces of the same character of wilful selfishness, mistaking the inveteracy of its purposes for their rectitude, and boldly appealing to power as justifying the abuses of power, may not be found to warrant this an undoubted original—probably a fac-simile of some individual of the poet's actual acquaintance. In less advanced periods of society than that in which we live, if we except rank, which can neither be an object of common pursuit nor immediate attainment, money is the only acknowledged passport to respect. It is not merely valuable as a security from want, but it is the only defence against the insolence of power. Avarice is sharpened by pride and necessity. There are then few of the arts, the amusements, and accomplishments that soften and sweeten life, that raise or refine it: the only way in which any one can be of service to himself or another, is by his command over the gross commodities of life; and a man is worth just so much as he has. Where he who is not 'lord of acres' is looked upon as a slave and a beggar, the soul becomes wedded to the soil by which its worth is measured, and takes root in it in proportion to its own strength and

this tragedy in general, and of a great deal more in some few of the scenes, particularly in the quarrel between Annabella and her husband, which is wrought up to a pitch of demoniac scorn and phrensy with consummate art and knowledge; but I do not find much other power in the author (generally speaking) than that of playing with edged tools, and knowing the use of poisoned weapons. And what confirms me in this opinion is the comparative inefficiency of his other plays. Except the last scene of the Broken Heart (which I think extravagant—others may think it sublime, and be right) they are merely exercises of style and effusions of wire-drawn sentiment. Where they have not the sting of illicit passion, they are quite pointless, and seem painted on gauze, or spun of cobwebs. The affected brevity and

stubbornness of character. The example of Wellborn may be cited in illustration of these remarks. The loss of his land makes all the difference between "young master Wellborn" and "rogue Wellborn;" and the treatment he meets with in this latter capacity is the best apology for the character of Sir Giles. Of the two it is better to be the oppressor than the oppressed.

'Massinger, it is true, dealt generally in extreme characters, as well as in very repulsive ones. The passion is with him wound up to its height at once, and he never lets it down afterwards. It does not gradually arise out of previous circumstances, nor is it modified by other passions. This gives an appearance of abruptness, violence, and extravagance to all his plays. Shakespear's characters act from mixed motives, and are made what they are by various circumstances. Massinger's characters act from single motives, and become what they are, and remain so, by a pure effort of the will, in spite of circumstances. This last author endeavoured to embody an abstract principle; labours hard to bring out the same individual trait in its most exaggerated state; and the force of his impassioned characters arises for the most part, from the obstinacy with which they exclude every other feeling. Their vices look of a gigantic stature from their standing alone. Their actions seem extravagant from their having always the same fixed aim—the same incorrigible purpose. The fault of Sir Giles Overreach, in this respect, is less in the excess to which he pushes a favourite propensity, than in the circumstance of its being unmixed with any other virtue or vice.

'We may find the same simplicity of dramatic conception in the comic as in the tragic characters of the author. Justice Greedy has but one idea or subject in his head throughout. He is always eating, or talking of eating. His belly is always in his mouth, and we know nothing of him but his appetite; he is as sharpset as travellers from off a journey. His land of promise touches on the borders of the wilderness: his thoughts are constantly in apprehension of feasting or famishing. A fat turkey floats before his imagination in royal state, and his hunger sees visions of chines of beef, venison pasties, and Norfolk dumplings, as if it were seized with a calenture. He is a very amusing personage; and in what relates to eating and drinking, as peremptory as Sir Giles himself.—Marrall is another instance of confined comic humour, whose ideas never wander beyond the ambition of being the implicit drudge of another's knavery or good fortune. He sticks to his stewardship, and resists the favour of a salute from a fine lady as not entered in his accounts. The humour of this character is less striking in the play than in Munden's personification of it. The other characters do not require any particular analysis. They are very insipid, good sort of people.'

division of some of the lines into hemistichs, &c. so as to make in one case a mathematical stair-case of the words and answers given to different speakers,[1] is an instance of frigid and ridiculous pedantry. An artificial elaborateness is the general characteristic of Ford's style. In this respect his plays resemble Miss Baillie's more than any others I am acquainted with, and are quite distinct from the exuberance and unstudied force which characterised his immediate predecessors. There is too much of scholastic subtlety, an innate perversity of understanding or predominance of will, which either seeks the irritation of inadmissible subjects, or to stimulate its own faculties by taking the most barren, and making something out of nothing, in a spirit of contradiction. He does not *draw along with* the reader: he does not work upon our sympathy, but on our antipathy or our indifference; and there is as little of the social or gregarious principle in his productions as there appears to have been in his personal habits, if we are to believe Sir John Suckling, who says of him in the Sessions of the Poets—

'In the dumps John Ford alone by himself sat
With folded arms and melancholy hat.'

I do not remember without considerable effort the plot or persons of most of his plays—Perkin Warbeck, The Lover's Melancholy, Love's Sacrifice, and the rest. There is little character, except of the most evanescent or extravagant kind (to which last class we may refer that of the sister of Calantha in the Broken Heart)—little imagery or fancy, and no action. It is but fair however to give a scene or two, in illustration of these remarks (or in confutation of them, if they are wrong) and I shall take the concluding one of the Broken Heart, which is held up as the author's master-piece.

'SCENE—*A Room in the Palace.*

Loud Music.—Enter Euphranea, *led by* Groneas *and* Hemophil: Prophilus, *led by* Christalla *and* Philema: Nearchus *supporting* Calantha, Crotolon, *and* Amelus.—(*Music ceases*).

Cal. We miss our servants, Ithocles and Orgilus; on whom attend they?
Crot. My son, gracious princess,
Whisper'd some new device, to which these revels

[1] '*Ithocles.* Soft peace enrich this room.
Orgilus. How fares the lady?
Philema. Dead!
Christalla. Dead!
Philema. Starv'd!
Christalla. Starv'd!
Ithocles. Me miserable!'

Should be but usher: wherein I conceive
Lord Ithocles and he himself are actors.
Cal. A fair excuse for absence. As for Bassanes,
Delights to him are troublesome. Armostes
Is with the king?
Crot. He is.
Cal. On to the dance!
Dear cousin, hand you the bride: the bridegroom must be
Entrusted to my courtship. Be not jealous,
Euphranea; I shall scarcely prove a temptress.
Fall to our dance!

(*They dance the first change, during which enter* Armostes).

Arm. (*in a whisper to* Calantha). The king your father's dead.
Cal. To the other change.
Arm. Is 't possible?

Another Dance.—Enter Bassanes.

Bass. (*in a whisper to* Calantha). Oh! Madam,
Panthea, poor Panthea 's starv'd.
Cal. Beshrew thee!
Lead to the next!
Bass. Amazement dulls my senses.

Another Dance.—Enter Orgilus.

Org. Brave Ithocles is murder'd, murder'd cruelly.
(*Aside to* Calantha).
Cal. How dull this music sounds! Strike up more sprightly:
Our footings are not active like our heart,[1]
Which treads the nimbler measure.
Org. I am thunderstruck.

The last Change.—Music ceases.

Cal. So; Let us breathe awhile. Hath not this motion
Rais'd fresher colours on our cheek?
Near. Sweet princess,
A perfect purity of blood enamels
The beauty of your white.
Cal. We all look cheerfully:
And, cousin, 'tis methinks a rare presumption
In any who prefers our lawful pleasures
Before their own sour censure, to interrupt
The custom of this ceremony bluntly.
Near. None dares, lady.
Cal. Yes, yes; some hollow voice deliver'd to me
How that the king was dead.
Arm. The king is dead,' &c. &c.

[1] 'High as our heart.'—See passage from the Malcontent.

This, I confess, appears to me to be tragedy in masquerade. Nor is it, I think, accounted for, though it may be in part redeemed by her solemn address at the altar to the dead body of her husband.

'*Cal.* Forgive me. Now I turn to thee, thou shadow
Of my contracted lord ! Bear witness all,
I put my mother's wedding-ring upon
His finger ; 'twas my father's last bequest :
(*Places a ring on the finger of* Ithocles).
Thus I new marry him, whose wife I am :
Death shall not separate us. Oh, my lords,
I but deceiv'd your eyes with antic gesture,
When one news strait came huddling on another
Of death, and death, and death : still I danc'd forward ;
But it struck home and here, and in an instant.
Be such mere women, who with shrieks and outcries
Can vow a present end to all their sorrows,
Yet live to vow new pleasures, and outlive them.
They are the silent griefs which cut the heartstrings :
Let me die smiling.
Near. 'Tis a truth too ominous.
Cal. One kiss on these cold lips—my last : crack, crack :
Argos, now Sparta's king, command the voices
Which wait at th' altar, now to sing the song
I fitted for my end.'

And then, after the song, she dies.

This is the true false gallop of sentiment: any thing more artificial and mechanical I cannot conceive. The boldness of the attempt, however, the very extravagance, might argue the reliance of the author on the truth of feeling prompting him to hazard it; but the whole scene is a forced transposition of that already alluded to in Marston's Malcontent. Even the form of the stage directions is the same.

'*Enter* Mendozo *supporting the* Duchess ; Guerrino ; *the Ladies that are on the stage rise.* Ferrardo *ushers in the* Duchess ; *then takes a Lady to tread a measure.*

Aurelia. We will dance : music : we will dance. . . .

Enter Prepasso.

Who saw the Duke ? the Duke ?
Aurelia. Music.
Prepasso. The Duke ? is the Duke returned ?
Aurelia. Music.
Enter Celso.
The Duke is quite invisible, or else is not.

Aurelia. We are not pleased with your intrusion upon our private retirement; we are not pleased: you have forgot yourselves.

Enter a Page.

Celso. Boy, thy master? where's the Duke?

Page. Alas, I left him burying the earth with his spread joyless limbs; he told me he was heavy, would sleep: bid me walk off, for the strength of fantasy oft made him talk in his dreams: I strait obeyed, nor ever saw him since; but wheresoe'er he is, he's sad.

Aurelia. Music, sound high, as in our heart; sound high.

Enter Malevole *and her Husband, disguised like a Hermit.*

Malevole. The Duke? Peace, the Duke is dead.

Aurelia. Music!' *Act IV. Scene 3.*

The passage in Ford appears to me an ill-judged copy from this. That a woman should call for music, and dance on in spite of the death of her husband whom she hates, without regard to common decency, is but too possible: that she should dance on with the same heroic perseverance in spite of the death of her husband, of her father, and of every one else whom she loves, from regard to common courtesy or appearance, is not surely natural. The passions may silence the voice of humanity, but it is, I think, equally against probability and decorum to make both the passions and the voice of humanity give way (as in the example of Calantha) to a mere form of outward behaviour. Such a suppression of the strongest and most uncontroulable feelings can only be justified from necessity, for some great purpose, which is not the case in Ford's play; or it must be done for the effect and *eclat* of the thing, which is not fortitude but affectation. Mr. Lamb in his impressive eulogy on this passage in the Broken Heart has failed (as far as I can judge) in establishing the parallel between this uncalled-for exhibition of stoicism, and the story of the Spartan Boy.

It may be proper to remark here, that most of the great men of the period I have treated of (except the greatest of all, and one other) were men of classical education. They were learned men in an unlettered age; not self-taught men in a literary and critical age. This circumstance should be taken into the account in a theory of the dramatic genius of that age. Except Shakespear, nearly all of them, indeed, came up from Oxford or Cambridge, and immediately began to write for the stage. No wonder. The first coming up to London in those days must have had a singular effect upon a young man of genius, almost like visiting Babylon or Susa, or a journey to the other world. The stage (even as it then was), after the

recluseness and austerity of a college-life, must have appeared like Armida's enchanted palace, and its gay votaries like

> 'Fairy elves beyond the Indian mount,
> Whose midnight revels, by a forest-side
> Or fountain, some belated peasant sees,
> Or dreams he sees; while overhead the moon
> Sits arbitress, and nearer to the earth
> Wheels her pale course: they on their mirth and dance
> Intent, with jocund music charm his ear:
> At once with joy and fear his heart rebounds.'

So our young novices must have felt when they first saw the magic of the scene, and heard its syren sounds with rustic wonder, and the scholar's pride: and the joy that streamed from their eyes at that fantastic vision, at that gaudy shadow of life, of all its business and all its pleasures, and kindled their enthusiasm to join the mimic throng, still has left a long lingering glory behind it; and though now 'deaf the praised ear, and mute the tuneful tongue,' lives in their eloquent page, 'informed with music, sentiment, and thought, never to die!'

LECTURE V

ON SINGLE PLAYS, POEMS, ETC., THE FOUR P'S, THE RETURN FROM PARNASSUS, GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE, AND OTHER WORKS.

I SHALL, in this Lecture, turn back to give some account of single plays, poems, etc.; the authors of which are either not known or not very eminent, and the productions themselves, in general, more remarkable for their singularity, or as specimens of the style and manners of the age, than for their intrinsic merit or poetical excellence. There are many more works of this kind, however, remaining, than I can pretend to give an account of; and what I shall chiefly aim at, will be, to excite the curiosity of the reader, rather than to satisfy it.

The FOUR P's is an interlude, or comic dialogue, in verse, between a Palmer, a Pardoner, a Poticary, and a Pedlar, in which each exposes the tricks of his own and his neighbours' profession, with much humour and shrewdness. It was written by John Heywood, the Epigrammatist, who flourished chiefly in the reign of Henry VIII., was the intimate friend of Sir Thomas More, with whom he seems to have had a congenial spirit, and died abroad, in consequence of his

devotion to the Roman Catholic cause, about the year 1565. His zeal, however, on this head, does not seem to have blinded his judgment, or to have prevented him from using the utmost freedom and severity in lashing the abuses of Popery, at which he seems to have looked 'with the malice of a friend.' The Four P's bears the date of 1547. It is very curious, as an evidence both of the wit, the manners, and opinions of the time. Each of the parties in the dialogue gives an account of the boasted advantages of his own particular calling, that is, of the frauds which he practises on credulity and ignorance, and is laughed at by the others in turn. In fact, they all of them strive to outbrave each other, till the contest becomes a jest, and it ends in a wager, who shall tell the greatest lie? when the prize is adjudged to him, who says, that he had found a patient woman.[1] The common superstitions (here recorded) in civil and religious matters, are almost incredible; and the chopped logic, which was the fashion of the time, and which comes in aid of the author's shrewd and pleasant sallies to expose them, is highly entertaining. Thus the Pardoner, scorning the Palmer's long pilgrimages and circuitous route to Heaven, flouts him to his face, and vaunts his own superior pretensions.

'*Pard.* By the first part of this last tale,
It seemeth you came of late from the ale:
For reason on your side so far doth fail,
That you leave reasoning, and begin to rail.
Wherein you forget your own part clearly,
For you be as untrue as I:
But in one point you are beyond me,
For you may lie by authority,
And all that have wandered so far,
That no man can be their controller.
And where you esteem your labour so much,
I say yet again, my pardons are such,
That if there were a thousand souls on a heap,
I would bring them all to heaven as good sheep,
As you have brought yourself on pilgrimage,
In the last quarter of your voyage,
Which is far a this side heaven, by God:
There your labour and pardon is odd.
With small cost without any pain,
These pardons bring them to heaven plain:
Give me but a penny or two-pence,
And as soon as the soul departeth hence,
In half an hour, or three-quarters at the most,
The soul is in heaven with the Holy Ghost.'

[1] Or never known one otherwise than patient.

The Poticary does not approve of this arrogance of the Friar, and undertakes, in mood and figure, to prove them both 'false knaves.' It is he, he says, who sends most souls to heaven, and who ought, therefore, to have the credit of it.

'No soul, ye know, entereth heaven-gate,
'Till from the body he be separate:
And whom have ye known die honestly,
Without help of the Poticary?
Nay, all that cometh to our handling,
Except ye hap to come to hanging. . . . .
Since of our souls the multitude
I send to heaven, when all is view'd
Who should but I then altogether
Have thank of all their coming thither?'

The Pardoner here interrupts him captiously—

'If ye kill'd a thousand in an hour's space,
When come they to heaven, dying out of grace?'

But the Poticary not so baffled, retorts—

'If a thousand pardons about your necks were tied;
When come they to heaven, if they never died?
* * * * * *
But when ye feel your conscience ready,
I can send you to heaven very quickly.'

The Pedlar finds out the weak side of his new companions, and tells them very bluntly, on their referring their dispute to him, a piece of his mind.

'Now have I found one mastery,
That ye can do indifferently;
And it is neither selling nor buying,
But even only very lying.'

At this game of imposture, the cunning dealer in pins and laces undertakes to judge their merits; and they accordingly set to work like regular graduates. The Pardoner takes the lead, with an account of the virtues of his relics; and here we may find a plentiful mixture of Popish superstition and indecency. The bigotry of any age is by no means a test of its piety, or even sincerity. Men seemed to make themselves amends for the enormity of their faith by levity of feeling, as well as by laxity of principle; and in the indifference or ridicule with which they treated the wilful absurdities and extravagances to which they hood-winked their understandings, almost resembled children playing at blindman's buff, who grope their way in the dark, and make blunders on purpose to laugh at their own idleness and

folly. The sort of mummery at which Popish bigotry used to play at the time when this old comedy was written, was not quite so harmless as blind-man's buff: what was sport to her, was death to others. She laughed at her own mockeries of common sense and true religion, and murdered while she laughed. The tragic farce was no longer to be borne, and it was partly put an end to. At present, though her eyes are blindfolded, her hands are tied fast behind her, like the false Duessa's. The sturdy genius of modern philosophy has got her in much the same situation that Count Fathom has the old woman that he lashes before him from the robbers' cave in the forest. In the following dialogue of this lively satire, the most sacred mysteries of the Catholic faith are mixed up with its idlest legends by old Heywood, who was a martyr to his religious zeal without the slightest sense of impropriety. The Pardoner cries out in one place (like a lusty Friar John, or a trusty Friar Onion)—

'Lo, here be pardons, half a dozen,
For ghostly riches they have no cousin;
And moreover, to me they bring
Sufficient succour for my living.
And here be relics of such a kind,
As in this world no man can find.
Kneel down all three, and when ye leave kissing,
Who list to offer shall have my blessing.
Friends, here shall ye see even anon,
Of All-Hallows the blessed jaw-bone.
Mark well this, this relic here is a whipper;
My friends unfeigned, here is a slipper
Of one of the seven sleepers, be sure.—
Here is an eye-tooth of the great Turk:
Whose eyes be once set on this piece of work,
May happily lose part of his eye-sight,
But not all till he be blind outright.
Kiss it hardly with good devotion.
Pot. This kiss shall bring us much promotion:
Fogh, by St. Saviour I never kiss'd a worse.
* * * * * *
For by All-Hallows, yet methinketh,
That All-Hallows' breath stinketh.
Palm. Ye judge All-Hallows' breath unknown:
If any breath stink, it is your own.
Pot. I know mine own breath from All-Hallows,
Or else it were time to kiss the gallows.
Pard. Nay, Sirs, here may ye see
The great toe of the Trinity;
Who to this toe any money voweth,
And once may roll it in his mouth,

All his life after I undertake,
He shall never be vex'd with the tooth-ache.
Pot. I pray you turn that relic about;
Either the Trinity had the gout;
Or else, because it is three toes in one,
God made it as much as three toes alone.
Pard. Well, let that pass, and look upon this:
Here is a relic that doth not miss
To help the least as well as the most:
This is a buttock-bone of Penticost.
* * * * * *
Here is a box full of humble bees,
That stung Eve as she sat on her knees
Tasting the fruit to her forbidden:
Who kisseth the bees within this hidden,
Shall have as much pardon of right,
As for any relic he kiss'd this night . .
Good friends, I have yet here in this glass,
Which on the drink at the wedding was
Of Adam and Eve undoubtedly:
If ye honour this relic devoutly,
Although ye thirst no whit the less,
Yet shall ye drink the more, doubtless.
After which drinking, ye shall be as meet
To stand on your head as on your feet.'

The same sort of significant irony runs through the Apothecary's knavish enumeration of miraculous cures in his possession.

'For this medicine helpeth one and other,
And bringeth them in case that they need no other.
Here is a *syrapus de Byzansis*,
A little thing is enough of this;
For even the weight of one scrippal
Shall make you as strong as a cripple. . . .
These be the things that break all strife,
Between man's sickness and his life.
From all pain these shall you deliver,
And set you even at rest forever.
Here is a medicine no more like the same,
Which commonly is called thus by name. . . .
Not one thing here particularly,
But worketh universally;
For it doth me as much good when I sell it,
As all the buyers that taste it or smell it.
If any reward may entreat ye,
I beseech your mastership be good to me,
And ye shall have a box of marmalade,
So fine that you may dig it with a spade.'

After these quaint but pointed examples of it, Swift's boast with respect to the invention of irony,

> 'Which I was born to introduce,
> Refin'd it first, and shew'd its use,'

can be allowed to be true only in part.

The controversy between them being undecided, the Apothecary, to clench his pretensions 'as a liar of the first magnitude,' by a *coup-de-grace*, says to the Pedlar, 'You are an honest man,' but this home-thrust is somehow ingeniously parried. The Apothecary and Pardoner fall to their narrative vein again; and the latter tells a story of fetching a young woman from the lower world, from which I shall only give one specimen more as an instance of ludicrous and fantastic exaggeration. By the help of a passport from Lucifer, 'given in the furnace of our palace,' he obtains a safe conduct from one of the subordinate imps to his master's presence.

> 'This devil and I walked arm in arm
> So far, 'till he had brought me thither,
> Where all the devils of hell together
> Stood in array in such apparel,
> As for that day there meetly fell.
> Their horns well gilt, their claws full clean,
> Their tails well kempt, and as I ween,
> With sothery butter their bodies anointed;
> I never saw devils so well appointed.
> The master-devil sat in his jacket,
> And all the souls were playing at racket
> None other rackets they had in hand,
> Save every soul a good fire-brand;
> Wherewith they play'd so prettily,
> That Lucifer laugh'd merrily.
> And all the residue of the fiends
> Did laugh thereat full well like friends.
> But of my friend I saw no whit,
> Nor durst not ask for her as yet.
> Anon all this rout was brought in silence,
> And I by an usher brought to presence
> Of Lucifer; then low, as well I could,
> I kneeled, which he so well allow'd
> That thus he beck'd, and by St. Antony
> He smiled on me well-favour'dly,
> Bending his brows as broad as barn-doors;
> Shaking his ears as rugged as burrs;
> Rolling his eyes as round as two bushels;
> Flashing the fire out of his nostrils;

> Gnashing his teeth so vain-gloriously,
> That methought time to fall to flattery,
> Wherewith I told, as I shall tell;
> Oh pleasant picture! O prince of hell!' &c.

The piece concludes with some good wholesome advice from the Pedlar, who here, as well as in the poem of the Excursion, performs the part of Old Morality; but he does not seem, as in the latter case, to be acquainted wth the 'mighty stream of Tendency.' He is more 'full of wise saws than modern instances;' as prosing, but less paradoxical!

> 'But where ye doubt, the truth not knowing,
> Believing the best, good may be growing.
> In judging the best, no harm at the least:
> In judging the worst, no good at the best.
> But best in these things it seemeth to me,
> To make no judgment upon ye;
> But as the church does judge or take them,
> So do ye receive or forsake them.
> And so be you sure you cannot err,
> But may be a fruitful follower.'

Nothing can be clearer than this.

The RETURN FROM PARNASSUS was 'first publicly acted,' as the title-page imports, 'by the Students in St. John's College, in Cambridge.' It is a very singular, a very ingenious, and as I think, a very interesting performance. It contains criticisms on contemporary authors, strictures on living manners, and the earliest denunciation (I know of) of the miseries and unprofitableness of a scholar's life. The only part I object to in our author's criticism is his abuse of Marston; and that, not because he says what is severe, but because he says what is not true of him. Anger may sharpen our insight into men's defects; but nothing should make us blind to their excellences. The whole passage is, however, so curious in itself (like the Edinburgh Review lately published for the year 1755) that I cannot forbear quoting a great part of it. We find in the list of candidates for praise many a name—

> 'That like a trumpet, makes the spirits dance:'

there are others that have long since sunk to the bottom of the stream of time, and no Humane Society of Antiquarians and Critics is ever likely to fish them up again.

'Read the names,' says Judicio.

'*Ingenioso.* So I will, if thou wilt help me to censure them.

Edmund Spenser,
Henry Constable,
Thomas Lodge,
Samuel Daniel,
Thomas Watson,
Michael Drayton,
John Davis,
John Marston,
Kit. Marlowe,
William Shakespear;' and one Churchyard [who is consigned to an untimely grave.]

'Good men and true, stand together, hear your censure: what's thy judgment of Spenser?

Jud. A sweeter swan than ever sung in Po;
A shriller nightingale than ever blest
The prouder groves of self-admiring Rome.
Blithe was each valley, and each shepherd proud,
While he did chaunt his rural minstrelsy.
Attentive was full many a dainty ear:
Nay, hearers hung upon his melting tongue,
While sweetly of his Faëry Queen he sung;
While to the water's fall he tuned her fame,
And in each bark engrav'd Eliza's name.
And yet for all, this unregarding soil
Unlaced the line of his desired life,
Denying maintenance for his dear relief;
Careless even to prevent his exequy,
Scarce deigning to shut up his dying eye.

Ing. Pity it is that gentler wits should breed,
Where thick-skinn'd chuffs laugh at a scholar's need.
But softly may our honour'd ashes rest,
That lie by merry Chaucer's noble chest.

But I pray thee proceed briefly in thy censure, that I may be proud of myself, as in the first, so in the last, my censure may jump with thine. Henry Constable, Samuel Daniel, Thomas Lodge, Thomas Watson.

Jud. Sweet Constable doth take the wondering ear,
And lays it up in willing prisonment:
Sweet honey-dropping Daniel doth wage
War with the proudest big Italian,
That melts his heart in sugar'd sonnetting.
Only let him more sparingly make use
Of others' wit, and use his own the more,
That well may scorn base imitation.
For Lodge and Watson, men of some desert,
Yet subject to a critic's marginal:
Lodge for his oar in every paper boat,
He that turns over Galen every day,
To sit and simper Euphues' legacy.

Ing. Michael Drayton.

Jud. Drayton's sweet Muse is like a sanguine dye,
Able to ravish the rash gazer's eye.

Ing. However, he wants one true note of a poet of our times; and that is this, he cannot swagger in a tavern, nor domineer in a hot-house. John Davis—

Jud. Acute John Davis, I affect thy rhymes,
That jerk in hidden charms these looser times:
Thy plainer verse, thy unaffected vein,
Is graced with a fair and sweeping train.
John Marston—

Jud. What, Monsieur Kinsayder, put up man, put up for shame,
Methinks he is a ruffian in his style,
Withouten bands or garters' ornament.
He quaffs a cup of Frenchman's helicon,
Then royster doyster in his oily terms
Cuts, thrusts, and foins at whomsoe'er he meets,
And strews about Ram-alley meditations.
Tut, what cares he for modest close-couch'd terms,
Cleanly to gird our looser libertines?
Give him plain naked words stript from their shirts,
That might beseem plain-dealing Aretine.

Ing. Christopher Marlowe—

Jud. Marlowe was happy in his buskin'd Muse;
Alas! unhappy in his life and end.
Pity it is that wit so ill should dwell,
Wit lent from heaven, but vices sent from hell.

Ing. Our theatre hath lost, Pluto hath got
A tragic penman for a dreary plot.
Benjamin Jonson.

Jud. The wittiest fellow of a bricklayer in England.

Ing. A mere empirick, one that gets what he hath by observation, and makes only nature privy to what he endites: so slow an inventor, that he were better betake himself to his old trade of bricklaying, a blood whoreson, as confident now in making of a book, as he was in times past in laying of a brick.
William Shakespear.

Jud. Who loves Adonis' love, or Lucrece' rape,
His sweeter verse contains heart-robbing life,
Could but a graver subject him content,
Without love's lazy foolish languishment.'

This passage might seem to ascertain the date of the piece, as it must be supposed to have been written before Shakespeare had become known as a dramatic poet. Yet he afterwards introduces Kempe the actor talking with Burbage, and saying, 'Few (of the University) pen plays well: they smell too much of that writer Ovid, and of that writer Metamorphosis, and talk too much of Proserpina and Jupiter. Why here's our fellow Shakespear puts them all down; aye, and Ben Jonson too.'—There is a good deal

of discontent in all this; but the author complains of want of success in a former attempt, and appears not to have been on good terms with fortune. The miseries of a poet's life form one of the favourite topics of The Return from Parnassus, and are treated, as if by some one who had 'felt them knowingly.' Thus Philomusus and Studioso chaunt their griefs in concert.

'*Phil.* Bann'd be those hours, when 'mongst the learned throng,
By Granta's muddy bank we whilom sung.
Stud. Bann'd be that hill which learned wits adore,
Where erst we spent our stock and little store.
Phil. Bann'd be those musty mews, where we have spent
Our youthful days in paled languishment.
Stud. Bann'd be those cozening arts that wrought our woe,
Making us wandering pilgrims to and fro . . .
Phil. Curst be our thoughts whene'er they dream of hope;
Bann'd be those haps that henceforth flatter us,
When mischief dogs us still, and still for aye,
From our first birth until our burying day.
In our first gamesome age, our doting sires
Carked and car'd to have us lettered:
Sent us to Cambridge where our oil is spent:
Us our kind college from the teat did tent,
And forced us walk before we weaned were.
From that time since wandered have we still
In the wide world, urg'd by our forced will;
Nor ever have we happy fortune tried;
Then why should hope with our rent state abide?'

'Out of our proof we speak.'—This sorry matter-of-fact retrospect of the evils of a college-life is very different from the hypothetical aspirations after its incommunicable blessings expressed by a living writer of true genius and a lover of true learning, who does not seem to have been cured of the old-fashioned prejudice in favour of classic lore, two hundred years after its vanity and vexation of spirit had been denounced in the Return from Parnassus:

'I was not train'd in Academic bowers;
And to those learned streams I nothing owe,
Which copious from those fair twin founts do flow:
Mine have been any thing but studious hours.
Yet can I fancy, wandering 'mid thy towers,
Myself a nursling, Granta, of thy lap.
My brow seems tightening with the Doctor's cap;
And I walk gowned; feel unusual powers.
Strange forms of logic clothe my admiring speech;
Old Ramus' ghost is busy at my brain,

And my skull teems with notions infinite:
Be still, ye reeds of Camus, while I teach
Truths which transcend the searching schoolmen's vein;
And half had stagger'd that stout Stagyrite.[1]

Thus it is that our treasure always lies, where our knowledge does not; and fortunately enough perhaps; for the empire of imagination is wider and more prolific than that of experience.

The author of the old play, whoever he was, appears to have belonged to that class of mortals, who, as Fielding has it, feed upon their own hearts; who are egotists the wrong way, 'made desperate by too quick a sense of constant infelicity;' and have the same intense uneasy consciousness of their own defects that most men have self-complacency in their supposed advantages. Thus venting the dribblets of his spleen still upon himself, he prompts the Page to say, 'A mere scholar is a creature that can strike fire in the morning at his tinder-box, put on a pair of lined slippers, sit reuming till dinner, and then go to his meat when the bell rings; one that hath a peculiar gift in a cough, and a licence to spit: or if you will have him defined by negatives, he is one that cannot make a good leg, one that cannot eat a mess of broth cleanly, one that cannot ride a horse without spur-galling, one that cannot salute a woman, and look on her directly, one that cannot——'

If I was not afraid of being tedious, I might here give the examination of Signor Immerito, a raw ignorant clown (whose father has purchased him a living) by Sir Roderick and the Recorder, which throws considerable light on the state of wit and humour, as well as of ecclesiastical patronage in the reign of Elizabeth. It is to be recollected, that one of the titles of this play is A Scourge for Simony.

'*Rec.* For as much as nature has done her part in making you a handsome likely man—in the next place some art is requisite for the perfection of nature: for the trial whereof, at the request of my worshipful friend, I will in some sort propound questions fit to be resolved by one of your profession. Say what is a person, that was never at the university?

Im. A person that was never in the university, is a living creature that can eat a tythe pig.

Rec. Very well answered: but you should have added—and must be officious to his patron. Write down that answer, to shew his learning in logic.

Sir Rad. Yea, boy, write that down: very learnedly, in good faith. I pray now let me ask you one question that I remember, whether is the masculine gender or the feminine more worthy?

[1] Sonnet to Cambridge, by Charles Lamb.

Im. The feminine, Sir.

Sir Rad. The right answer, the right answer. In good faith, I have been of that mind always: write, boy, that, to shew he is a grammarian.

Rec. What university are you of?

Im. Of none.

Sir Rad. He tells truth: to tell truth is an excellent virtue: boy, make two heads, one for his learning, another for his virtues, and refer this to the head of his virtues, not of his learning. Now, Master Recorder, if it please you, I will examine him in an author, that will sound him to the depth; a book of astronomy, otherwise called an almanack.

Rec. Very good, Sir Roderick; it were to be wished there were no other book of humanity; then there would not be such busy state-prying fellows as are now a-days. Proceed, good Sir.

Sir Rad. What is the dominical letter?

Im. C, Sir, and please your worship.

Sir Rad. A very good answer, a very good answer, the very answer of the book. Write down that, and refer it to his skill in philosophy. How many days hath September?

Im. Thirty days hath September, April, June, and November, February hath twenty-eight alone, and all the rest hath thirty and one.

Sir Rad. Very learnedly, in good faith: he hath also a smack in poetry. Write down that, boy, to shew his learning in poetry. How many miles from Waltham to London?

Im. Twelve, Sir.

Sir Rad. How many from New Market to Grantham?

Im. Ten, Sir.

Sir Rad. Write down that answer of his, to shew his learning in arithmetic.

Page. He must needs be a good arithmetician that counted [out] money so lately.

Sir Rad. When is the new moon?

Im. The last quarter, the 5th day, at two of the clock, and thirty-eight minutes in the morning.

Sir Rad. How call you him that is weather-wise?

Rec. A good astronomer.

Sir Rad. Sirrah, boy, write him down for a good astronomer. What day of the month lights the queen's day on?

Im. The 17th of November.

Sir Rad. Boy, refer this to his virtues, and write him down a good subject.

Page. Faith, he were an excellent subject for two or three good wits: he would make a fine ass for an ape to ride upon.

Sir Rad. And these shall suffice for the parts of his learning. Now it remains to try, whether you be a man of a good utterance, that is, whether you can ask for the strayed heifer with the white face, as also chide the boys in the belfry, and bid the sexton whip out the dogs: let me hear your voice.

Im. If any man or woman—

Sir Rad. That's too high.
Im. If any man or woman—
Sir Rad. That's too low.
Im. If any man or woman can tell any tidings of a horse with four feet, two ears, that did stray about the seventh hour, three minutes in the forenoon, the fifth day—
Sir Rad. Boy, write him down for a good utterance. Master Recorder, I think he hath been examined sufficiently.
Rec. Aye, Sir Roderick, 'tis so: we have tried him very thoroughly.
Page. Aye, we have taken an inventory of his good parts, and prized them accordingly.
Sir Rad. Signior Immerito, forasmuch as we have made a double trial of thee, the one of your learning, the other of your erudition; it is expedient, also, in the next place, to give you a few exhortations, considering the greatest clerks are not the wisest men: this is therefore first to exhort you to abstain from controversies; secondly, not to gird at men of worship, such as myself, but to use yourself discreetly; thirdly, not to speak when any man or woman coughs: do so, and in so doing, I will persevere to be your worshipful friend and loving patron. Lead Immerito in to my son, and let him dispatch him, and remember my tythes to be reserved, paying twelve-pence a-year.'

Gammer Gurton's Needle [1] is a still older and more curious relic; and is a regular comedy in five acts, built on the circumstance of an old woman having lost her needle, which throws the whole village into confusion, till it is at last providentially found sticking in an unlucky part of Hodge's dress. This must evidently have happened at a time when the manufacturers of Sheffield and Birmingham had not reached the height of perfection which they have at present done. Suppose that there is only one sewing-needle in a parish, that the owner, a diligent notable old dame, loses it, that a mischief-making wag sets it about that another old woman has stolen this valuable instrument of household industry, that strict search is made every where in-doors for it in vain, and that then the incensed parties sally forth to scold it out in the open air, till words end in blows, and the affair is referred over to the higher authorities, and we shall have an exact idea (though perhaps not so lively a one) of what passes in this authentic document between Gammer Gurton and her Gossip Dame Chat, Dickon the Bedlam (the causer of these harms), Hodge, Gammer Gurton's servant, Tyb her maid, Cocke, her 'prentice boy, Doll, Scapethrift, Master Baillie his master, Doctor Rat, the Curate, and Gib the Cat, who may be fairly reckoned one of the *dramatis personæ*, and performs no mean part.

[1] The name of Still has been assigned as the author of this singular production, with the date of 1566.

'Gog's crosse, Gammer' (says Cocke the boy), 'if ye will laugh, look in
 but at the door,
And see how Hodge lieth tumbling and tossing amidst the floor,
Raking there, some fire to find among the ashes dead'
 [That is, to light a candle to look for the lost needle],
'Where there is not a spark so big as a pin's head:
At last in a dark corner two sparks he thought he sees,
Which were indeed nought else but Gib our cat's two eyes.
Puff, quoth Hodge; thinking thereby to have fire without doubt;
With that Gib shut her two eyes, and so the fire was out;
And by and by them open'd, even as they were before,
With that the sparks appeared, even as they had done of yore:
And even as Hodge blew the fire, as he did think,
Gib, as he felt the blast, strait way began to wink;
Till Hodge fell of swearing, as came best to his turn;
The fire was sure bewitch'd, and therefore would not burn.
At last Gib up the stairs, among old posts and pins,
And Hodge he hied him after, till broke were both his shins;
Cursing and swearing oaths, were never of his making,
That Gib would fire the house, if that she were not taken.'

Diccon the strolling beggar (or Bedlam, as he is called) steals a piece of bacon from behind Gammer Gurton's door, and in answer to Hodge's complaint of being dreadfully pinched for hunger, asks—

'Why Hodge, was there none at home thy dinner for to set?
 Hodge. Gog's bread, Diccon, I came too late, was nothing there to get
Gib (a foul fiend might on her light) lick'd the milk-pan so clean:
See Diccon, 'twas not so well wash'd this seven year, I ween.
A pestilence light on all ill luck, I had thought yet for all this,
Of a morsel of bacon behind the door, at worst I should not miss:
But when I sought a slip to cut, as I was wont to do,
Gog's souls, Diccon, Gib our cat had eat the bacon too.'

Hodge's difficulty in making Diccon understand what the needle is which his dame has lost, shows his superior acquaintance with the conveniences and modes of abridging labour in more civilised life, of which the other had no idea.

'*Hodge.* Has she not gone, trowest now thou, and lost her neele?' [So
 it is called here.]
'*Dic.* (*says staring*). Her eel, Hodge! Who fished of late? That
 was a dainty dish.
 Hodge. Tush, tush, her neele, her neele, her neele, man, 'tis neither flesh
 nor fish:
A little thing with a hole in the end, as bright as any siller [silver],
Small, long, sharp at the point, and strait as any pillar.
 Dic. I know not what a devil thou meanest, thou bring'st me more in
 doubt.

Hodge. (answers with disdain). Know'st not with what Tom tailor's man sits broching through a clout?
A neele, a neele, my Gammer's neele is gone.'

The rogue Diccon threatens to shew Hodge a spirit; but though Hodge runs away through pure fear before it has time to appear, he does not fail, in the true spirit of credulity, to give a faithful and alarming account of what he did not see to his mistress, concluding with a hit at the Popish Clergy.

'By the mass, I saw him of late call up a great black devil.
Oh, the knave cried, ho, ho, he roared and he thunder'd;
And ye had been there, I am sure you 'd murrainly ha' wonder'd.
Gam. Wast not thou afraid, Hodge, to see him in his place?
Hodge (lies and says). No, and he had come to me, should have laid him on his face,
Should have promised him.
Gam. But, Hodge, had he no horns to push?
Hodge. As long as your two arms. Saw ye never Friar Rush,
Painted on a cloth, with a fine long cow's tail,
And crooked cloven feet, and many a hooked nail?
For all the world (if I should judge) should reckon him his brother:
Look even what face Friar Rush had, the devil had such another.'

He then adds (quite apocryphally) while he is in for it, that 'the devil said plainly that Dame Chat had got the needle,' which makes all the disturbance. The same play contains the well-known good old song, beginning and ending—

'Back and side, go bare, go bare,
Both foot and hand go cold:
But belly, God send thee good ale enough,
Whether it be new or old.
I cannot eat but little meat,
My stomach is not good;
But sure I think, that I can drink
With him that wears a hood:
Though I go bare, take ye no care;
I nothing am a-cold:
I stuff my skin so full within
Of jolly good ale and old.
Back and side go bare, &c.

I love no roast, but a nut-brown toast,
And a crab laid in the fire:
A little bread shall do me stead,
Much bread I not desire.
No frost nor snow, no wind I trow,

Can hurt me if I wolde,
I am so wrapt and thoroughly lapt
In jolly good ale and old.
Back and side go bare, &c.

And Tib, my wife, that as her life
Loveth well good ale to seek ;
Full oft drinks she, till ye may see
The tears run down her cheek :
Then doth she troll to me the bowl,
Even as a malt-worm sholde :
And saith, sweetheart, I took my part
Of this jolly good ale and old.
Back and side go bare, go bare,
Both foot and hand go cold :
But belly, God send thee good ale enough,
Whether it be new or old.

Such was the wit, such was the mirth of our ancestors :—homely, but hearty ; coarse perhaps, but kindly. Let no man despise it, for 'Evil to him that evil thinks.' To think it poor and beneath notice because it is not just like ours, is the same sort of hypercriticism that was exercised by the person who refused to read some old books, because they were 'such very poor spelling.' The meagreness of their literary or their bodily fare was at least relished by themselves ; and this is better than a surfeit or an indigestion. It is refreshing to look out of ourselves sometimes, not to be always holding the glass to our own peerless perfections : and as there is a dead wall which always intercepts the prospect of the future from our view (all that we can see beyond it is the heavens), it is as well to direct our eyes now and then without scorn to the page of history, and repulsed in our attempts to penetrate the secrets of the next six thousand years, not to turn our backs on old long syne !

The other detached plays of nearly the same period of which I proposed to give a cursory account, are Green's Tu Quoque, Microcosmus, Lingua, The Merry Devil of Edmonton, The Pinner of Wakefield, and the Spanish Tragedy. Of the spurious plays attributed to Shakespear, and to be found in the editions of his works, such as the Yorkshire Tragedy, Sir John Oldcastle, The Widow of Watling Street, &c. I shall say nothing here, because I suppose the reader to be already acquainted with them, and because I have given a general account of them in another work.

Green's Tu Quoque, by George Cook, a contemporary of Shakespear's, is so called from Green the actor, who played the part of Bubble in this very lively and elegant comedy, with the cant

phrase of *Tu Quoque* perpetually in his mouth. The double change of situation between this fellow and his master, Staines, each passing from poverty to wealth, and from wealth to poverty again, is equally well imagined and executed. A gay and gallant spirit pervades the whole of it; wit, poetry, and morality, each take their turn in it. The characters of the two sisters, Joyce and Gertrude, are very skilfully contrasted, and the manner in which they mutually betray one another into the hands of their lovers, first in the spirit of mischief, and afterwards of retaliation, is quite dramatic. 'If you cannot find in your heart to tell him you love him, I 'll sigh it out for you. Come, we little creatures must help one another,' says the Madcap to the Madonna. As to style and matter, this play has a number of pigeon-holes full of wit and epigrams which are flying out in almost every sentence. I could give twenty pointed conceits, wrapped up in good set terms. Let one or two at the utmost suffice. A bad hand at cards is thus described. Will Rash says to Scattergood, 'Thou hast a wild hand indeed: thy small cards shew like a troop of rebels, and the knave of clubs their chief leader.' Bubble expresses a truism very gaily on finding himself equipped like a gallant—'How apparel makes a man respected! The very children in the street do adore me.' We find here the first mention of Sir John Suckling's 'melancholy hat,' as a common article of wear—the same which he chose to clap on Ford's head, and the first instance of the theatrical *double entendre* which has been repeated ever since of an actor's ironically abusing himself in his feigned character.

'*Gervase.* They say Green 's a good clown.
Bubble. (*Played by Green, says*) Green! Green 's an ass.
Scattergood. Wherefore do you say so?
Bub. Indeed, I ha' no reason; for they say he 's as like me as ever he can look.'

The following description of the dissipation of a fortune in the hands of a spendthrift is ingenious and beautiful.

'Know that which made him gracious in your eyes,
And gilded o'er his imperfections,
Is wasted and consumed even like ice,
Which by the vehemence of heat dissolves,
And glides to many rivers: so his wealth,
That felt a prodigal hand, hot in expence,
Melted within his gripe, and from his coffers
Ran like a violent stream to other men's.'

Microcosmus, by Thomas Nabbes, is a dramatic mask or allegory, in which the Senses, the Soul, a Good and a Bad Genius,

Conscience, &c. contend for the dominion of a man; and notwithstanding the awkwardness of the machinery, is not without poetry, elegance, and originality. Take the description of morning as a proof.

> 'What do I see? Blush, grey-eyed morn and spread
> Thy purple shame upon the mountain tops:
> Or pale thyself with envy, since here comes
> A brighter Venus than the dull-eyed star
> That lights thee up.'

But what are we to think of a play, of which the following is a literal list of the *dramatis personæ*?

'NATURE, a fair woman, in a white robe, wrought with birds, beasts, fruits, flowers, clouds, stars, &c.; on her head a wreath of flowers interwoven with stars.

JANUS, a man with two faces, signifying Providence, in a yellow robe, wrought with snakes, as he is *deus anni*: on his head a crown. He is Nature's husband.

FIRE, a fierce-countenanced young man, in a flame-coloured robe, wrought with gleams of fire; his hair red, and on his head a crown of flames. His creature a Vulcan.

AIR, a young man of a variable countenance, in a blue robe; wrought with divers-coloured clouds; his hair blue; and on his head a wreath of clouds. His creature a giant or silvan.

WATER, a young woman in a sea-green robe, wrought with waves; her hair a sea-green, and on her head a wreath of sedge bound about with waves. Her creature a syren.

EARTH, a young woman of a sad countenance, in a grass-green robe, wrought with sundry fruits and flowers; her hair black, and on her head a chaplet of flowers. Her creature a pigmy.

LOVE, a Cupid in a flame-coloured habit; bow and quiver, a crown of flaming hearts &c.

PHYSANDER, a perfect grown man, in a long white robe, and on his head a garland of white lilies and roses mixed. His name ἀπο τῆς φύσεος καὶ τῶ ἀνδρος.

CHOLER, a fencer; his clothes red.

BLOOD, a dancer, in a watchet-coloured suit.

PHLEGM, a physician, an old man; his doublet white and black; trunk hose.

MELANCHOLY, a musician: his complexion, hair, and clothes, black; a lute in his hand. He is likewise an amorist.

BELLANIMA, a lovely woman, in a long white robe; on her head a wreath of white flowers. She signifies the soul.

BONUS GENIUS, an angel, in a like white robe; wings and wreath white.

MALUS GENIUS, a devil, in a black robe; hair, wreath, and wings, black.

The Five Senses—SEEING, a chambermaid; HEARING, the usher of the hall; SMELLING, a huntsman or gardener; TASTING, a cook; TOUCHING, a gentleman usher.

SENSUALITY, a wanton woman, richly habited, but lasciviously dressed, &c.

TEMPERANCE, a lovely woman, of a modest countenance; her garments plain, but decent, &c.

A Philosopher,
An Eremite,
A Ploughman,
A Shepherd, } all properly habited.

Three Furies as they are commonly fancied.

FEAR, the Crier of the Court, with a tipstaff.

CONSCIENCE, the Judge of the Court.

HOPE and DESPAIR, an advocate and a lawyer.

The other three Virtues, as they are frequently expressed by painters.

The Heroes, in bright antique habits, &c.

The front of a workmanship, proper to the fancy of the rest, adorned with brass figures of angels and devils, with several inscriptions; the title is an escutcheon, supported by an Angel and a Devil. Within the arch a continuing perspective of ruins, which is drawn still before the other scenes, whilst they are varied.

THE INSCRIPTIONS.

Hinc gloria.	*Hinc pæna.*
Appetitus boni.	*Appetitus Mali.*'

Antony Brewer's Lingua (1607) is of the same cast. It is much longer as well as older than Microcosmus. It is also an allegory celebrating the contention of the Five Senses for the crown of superiority, and the pretensions of Lingua or the Tongue to be admitted as a sixth sense. It is full of child's play, and old wives' tales; but is not unadorned with passages displaying strong good sense, and powers of fantastic description.

Mr. Lamb has quoted two passages from it—the admirable enumeration of the characteristics of different languages, 'The Chaldee wise, the Arabian physical,' &c.; and the striking description of the ornaments and uses of tragedy and comedy. The dialogue between Memory, Common Sense, and Phantastes, is curious and worth considering.

'*Common Sense.* Why, good father, why are you so late now-a-days?

Memory. Thus 'tis; the most customers I remember myself to have, are, as your lordship knows, scholars, and now-a-days the most of them are become critics, bringing me home such paltry things to lay up for them, that I can hardly find them again.

Phantastes. Jupiter, Jupiter, I had thought these flies had bit none but myself: do critics tickle you, i'faith?

Mem. Very familiarly: for they must know of me, forsooth, how every idle word is written in all the musty moth-eaten manuscripts, kept in all the old libraries in every city, betwixt England and Peru.

Common Sense. Indeed I have noted these times to affect antiquities more than is requisite.

Mem. I remember in the age of Assaracus and Ninus, and about the wars of Thebes, and the siege of Troy, there were few things committed to my charge, but those that were well worthy the preserving; but now every trifle must be wrapp'd up in the volume of eternity. A rich pudding-wife, or a cobbler, cannot die but I must immortalize his name with an epitaph; a dog cannot water in a nobleman's shoe, but it must be sprinkled into the chronicles; so that I never could remember my treasure more full, and never emptier of honourable and true heroical actions.'

And again Mendacio puts in his claim with great success to many works of uncommon merit.

'*Appe.* Thou, boy! how is this possible? Thou art but a child, and there were sects of philosophy before thou wert born.

Men. Appetitus, thou mistakest me; I tell thee three thousand years ago was Mendacio born in Greece, nursed in Crete, and ever since honoured every where: I'll be sworn I held old Homer's pen when he writ his Iliads and his Odysseys.

Appe. Thou hadst need, for I hear say he was blind.

Men. I helped Herodotus to pen some part of his Muses; lent Pliny ink to write his history; rounded Rabelais in the ear when he historified Pantagruel; as for Lucian, I was his genius; O, those two books *de Vera Historia*, however they go under his name, I'll be sworn I writ them every tittle.

Appe. Sure as I am hungry, thou 'lt have it for lying. But hast thou rusted this latter time for want of exercise?

Men. Nothing less. I must confess I would fain have jogged Stow and great Hollingshed on their elbows, when they were about their chronicles; and, as I remember, Sir John Mandevill's travels, and a great part of the Decad's, were of my doing: but for the Mirror of Knighthood, Bevis of Southampton, Palmerin of England, Amadis of Gaul, Huon de Bourdeaux, Sir Guy of Warwick, Martin Marprelate, Robin Hood, Garagantua, Gerilion, and a thousand such exquisite monuments as these, no doubt but they breathe in my breath up and down.'

The Merry Devil of Edmonton which has been sometimes attributed to Shakespear, is assuredly not unworthy of him. It is more likely, however, both from the style and subject-matter to have been Heywood's than any other person's. It is perhaps the first example of sentimental comedy we have—romantic, sweet, tender, it expresses the feelings of honour, of love, and friendship in their utmost delicacy, enthusiasm, and purity. The names alone, Raymond Mounchersey, Frank Jerningham, Clare, Millisent, 'sound silver sweet like lovers' tongues by night.' It sets out with a sort of story of Doctor Faustus, but this is dropt as jarring on the tender chords of the rest of the piece. The wit of the Merry Devil of Edmonton is as genuine as the poetry. Mine Host of the George is as good a fellow as Boniface, and the deer-stealing scenes in the forest between

him, Sir John the curate, Smug the smith, and Banks the miller, are 'very honest knaveries,' as Sir Hugh Evans has it. The air is delicate, and the deer, shot by their cross-bows, fall without a groan! Frank Jerningham says to Clare,

'The way lies right: hark, the clock strikes at Enfield: what 's the hour?

Young Clare. Ten, the bell says.

Jern. It was but eight when we set out from Cheston: Sir John and his sexton are at their ale to-night, the clock runs at random.

Y. Clare. Nay, as sure as thou livest, the villainous vicar is abroad in the chase. The priest steals more venison than half the country.

Jern. Millisent, how dost thou?

Mil. Sir, very well.
I would to God we were at Brian's lodge.'

A volume might be written to prove this last answer Shakespear's, in which the tongue says one thing in one line, and the heart contradicts it in the next; but there were other writers living in the time of Shakespear, who knew these subtle windings of the passions besides him,—though none so well as he!

The Pinner of Wakefield, or George a Greene, is a pleasant interlude, of an early date, and the author unknown, in which kings and coblers, outlaws and maid Marians are 'hail-fellow well met,' and in which the features of the antique world are made smiling and amiable enough. Jenkin, George a Greene's servant, is a notorious wag. Here is one of his pretended pranks.

Jenkin. This fellow comes to me,
And takes me by the bosom: you slave,
Said he, hold my horse, and look
He takes no cold in his feet.
No, marry shall he, Sir, quoth I,
I 'll lay my cloak underneath him.
I took my cloak, spread it all along,
And his horse on the midst of it.

George. Thou clown, did'st thou set his horse upon thy cloak?

Jenk. Aye, but mark how I served him.
Madge and he was no sooner gone down into the ditch
But I plucked out my knife, cut four holes in my cloak,
and made his horse stand on the bare ground.'

The first part of Jeronymo is an indifferent piece of work, and the second, or the Spanish Tragedy by Kyd, is like unto it, except the interpolations idly said to have been added by Ben Jonson, relating to Jeronymo's phrensy 'which have all the melancholy madness of poetry, if not the inspiration.'

LECTURE VI

ON MISCELLANEOUS POEMS, F. BEAUMONT, P. FLETCHER, DRAYTON, DANIEL, &C. SIR P. SIDNEY'S ARCADIA, AND OTHER WORKS.

I SHALL, in the present Lecture, attempt to give some idea of the lighter productions of the Muse in the period before us, in order to shew that grace and elegance are not confined entirely to later times, and shall conclude with some remarks on Sir Philip Sidney's Arcadia.

I have already made mention of the lyrical pieces of Beaumont and Fletcher. It appears from his poems, that many of these were composed by Francis Beaumont, particularly the very beautiful ones in the tragedy of the False One, the Praise of Love in that of Valentinian, and another in the Nice Valour or Passionate Madman, an Address to Melancholy, which is the perfection of this kind of writing.

'Hence, all you vain delights;
As short as are the nights
Wherein you spend your folly:
There 's nought in this life sweet,
If man were wise to see 't,
But only melancholy,
Oh, sweetest melancholy.
Welcome folded arms and fixed eyes,
A sight that piercing mortifies;
A look that 's fasten'd to the ground,
A tongue chain'd up without a sound;
Fountain heads, and pathless groves,
Places which pale passion loves:
Moon-light walks, when all the fowls
Are warmly hous'd, save bats and owls;
A midnight bell, a passing groan,
These are the sounds we feed upon:
Then stretch our bones in a still, gloomy valley;
Nothing so dainty sweet as lovely melancholy.'

It has been supposed (and not without every appearance of good reason) that this pensive strain, 'most musical, most melancholy,' gave the first suggestion of the spirited introduction to Milton's Il Penseroso.

'Hence, vain deluding joys,
The brood of folly without father bred! . . .'.

But hail, thou Goddess, sage and holy,
Hail, divinest melancholy,
Whose saintly visage is too bright
To hit the sense of human sight, &c.'

The same writer thus moralises on the life of man, in a set of similes, as apposite as they are light and elegant.

'Like to the falling of a star,
Or as the flights of eagles are,
Or like the fresh spring's gaudy hue,
Or silver drops of morning dew,
Or like a wind that chafes the flood,
Or bubbles which on water stood:
Even such is man, whose borrow'd light
Is straight call'd in and paid to night:—
The wind blows out, the bubble dies;
The spring intomb'd in autumn lies;
The dew's dried up, the star is shot,
The flight is past, and man forgot.'

'The silver foam which the wind severs from the parted wave' is not more light or sparkling than this: the dove's downy pinion is not softer and smoother than the verse. We are too ready to conceive of the poetry of that day, as altogether old-fashioned, meagre, squalid, deformed, withered and wild in its attire, or as a sort of uncouth monster, like 'grim-visaged comfortless despair,' mounted on a lumbering, unmanageable Pegasus, dragon-winged, and leaden-hoofed; but it as often wore a sylph-like form with Attic vest, with faery feet, and the butterfly's gaudy wings. The bees were said to have come, and built their hive in the mouth of Plato when a child; and the fable might be transferred to the sweeter accents of Beaumont and Fletcher! Beaumont died at the age of five and twenty. One of these writers makes Bellario the Page say to Philaster, who threatens to take his life—

——''Tis not a life;
'Tis but a piece of childhood thrown away.'

But here was youth, genius, aspiring hope, growing reputation, cut off like a flower in its summer-pride, or like 'the lily on its stalk green,' which makes us repine at fortune and almost at nature, that seem to set so little store by their greatest favourites. The life of poets is or ought to be (judging of it from the light it lends to ours) a golden dream, full of brightness and sweetness, 'lapt in Elysium;' and it gives one a reluctant pang to see the splendid vision, by which they are attended in their path of glory, fade like

a vapour, and their sacred heads laid low in ashes, before the sand of common mortals has run out. Fletcher too was prematurely cut off by the plague. Raphael died at four and thirty, and Correggio at forty. Who can help wishing that they had lived to the age of Michael Angelo and Titian? Shakespear might have lived another half-century, enjoying fame and repose, 'now that his task was smoothly done,' listening to the music of his name, and better still, of his own thoughts, without minding Rymer's abuse of 'the tragedies of the last age.' His native stream of Avon would then have flowed with softer murmurs to the ear, and his pleasant birth-place, Stratford, would in that case have worn even a more gladsome smile than it does, to the eye of fancy!—Poets however have a sort of privileged after-life, which does not fall to the common lot: the rich and mighty are nothing but while they are living: their power ceases with them; but 'the sons of memory, the great heirs of fame' leave the best part of what was theirs, their thoughts, their verse, what they most delighted and prided themselves in, behind them—imperishable, incorruptible, immortal!—Sir John Beaumont (the brother of our dramatist) whose loyal and religious effusions are not worth much, very feelingly laments his brother's untimely death in an epitaph upon him.

'Thou should'st have followed me, but death to blame
Miscounted years, and measured age by fame:
So dearly hast thou bought thy precious lines,
Their praise grew swiftly; so thy life declines.
Thy Muse, the hearer's Queen, the reader's Love,
All ears, all hearts (but Death's) could please and move.

Beaumont's verses addressed to Ben Jonson at the Mermaid, are a pleasing record of their friendship, and of the way in which they 'fleeted the time carelessly' as well as studiously 'in the golden age' of our poetry.

[*Lines sent from the Country with two unfinished Comedies, which deferred their merry meetings at the Mermaid.*]

'The sun which doth the greatest comfort bring
To absent friends, because the self-same thing
They know they see, however absent is,
(Here our best hay-maker, forgive me this,
It is our country style) in this warm shine
I lie and dream of your full Mermaid wine:
Oh, we have water mixt with claret lees,
Drink apt to bring in drier heresies
Than here, good only for the sonnet's strain,
With fustian metaphors to stuff the brain:—

Think with one draught a man's invention fades,
Two cups had quite spoil'd Homer's Iliads.
'Tis liquor that will find out Sutclift's wit,
Like where he will, and make him write worse yet:
Fill'd with such moisture, in most grievous qualms[1]
Did Robert Wisdom write his singing psalms:
And so must I do this: and yet I think
It is a potion sent us down to drink
By special providence, keep us from fights,
Make us not laugh when we make legs to knights;
'Tis this that keeps our minds fit for our states,
A medicine to obey our magistrates.
* * * * *
Methinks the little wit I had is lost
Since I saw you, for wit is like a rest
Held up at tennis, which men do the best
With the best gamesters. What things have we seen
Done at the Mermaid! Hard words that have been
So nimble, and so full of subtile flame,
As if that every one from whence they came
Had meant to put his whole wit in a jest,
And had resolv'd to live a fool the rest
Of his dull life; then when there hath been thrown
Wit able enough to justify the town
For three days past, wit that might warrant be
For the whole city to talk foolishly,
Till that were cancell'd; and when that was gone,
We left an air behind us, which alone
Was able to make the two next companies
Right witty, though but downright fools more wise.'

I shall not, in this place repeat Marlowe's celebrated song, 'Come live with me and be my love,' nor Sir Walter Raleigh's no less celebrated answer to it (they may both be found in Walton's Complete Angler, accompanied with scenery and remarks worthy of them); but I may quote as a specimen of the high and romantic tone in which the poets of this age thought and spoke of each other the 'Vision upon the conceipt of the Fairy Queen,' understood to be by Sir Walter Raleigh.

'Methought I saw the grave where Laura lay,
Within that temple, where the vestal flame
Was wont to burn, and passing by that way
To see that buried dust of living fame,

[1] So in Rochester's Epigram.
'Sternhold and Hopkins had great qualms,
When they translated David's Psalms.'

Whose tomb fair Love, and fairer Virtue kept.
All suddenly I saw the Faery Queen:
At whose approach the soul of Petrarch wept;
And from thenceforth those Graces were not seen,
For they this queen attended, in whose stead
Oblivion laid him down on Laura's hearse.
Hereat the hardest stones were seen to bleed,
And groans of buried ghosts the Heav'ns did pierce,
Where Homer's spright did tremble all for grief,
And curst th' access of that celestial thief.'

A higher strain of compliment cannot well be conceived than this, which raises your idea even of that which it disparages in the comparison, and makes you feel that nothing could have torn the writer from his idolatrous enthusiasm for Petrarch and his Laura's tomb, but Spenser's magic verses and diviner Faery Queen—the one lifted above mortality, the other brought from the skies!

The name of Drummond of Hawthornden is in a manner entwined in cypher with that of Ben Jonson. He has not done himself or Jonson any credit by his account of their conversation; but his Sonnets are in the highest degree elegant, harmonious, and striking. It appears to me that they are more in the manner of Petrarch than any others that we have, with a certain intenseness in the sentiment, an occasional glitter of thought, and uniform terseness of expression. The reader may judge for himself from a few examples.

'I know that all beneath the moon decays,
And what by mortals in this world is wrought
In time's great periods shall return to nought;
That fairest states have fatal nights and days.
I know that all the Muse's heavenly lays,
With toil of spright which are so dearly bought,
As idle sounds, of few or none are sought;
That there is nothing lighter than vain praise.
I know frail beauty 's like the purple flow'r,
To which one morn oft birth and death affords;
That love a jarring is of minds' accords,
Where sense and will bring under reason's pow'r
Know what I list, this all cannot me move,
But that, alas! I both must write and love.'

Another—

'Fair moon, who with thy cold and silver shine
Mak'st sweet the horror of the dreadful night,
Delighting the weak eye with smiles divine,
Which Phœbus dazzles with his too much light;

Bright queen of the first Heav'n, if in thy shrine
By turning oft, and Heav'n's eternal might,
Thou hast not yet that once sweet fire of thine,
Endymion, forgot, and lovers' plight:
If cause like thine may pity breed in thee,
And pity somewhat else to it obtain,
Since thou hast power of dreams as well as he
That holds the golden rod and mortal chain;
Now while she sleeps,[1] in doleful guise her show,
These tears, and the black map of all my woe.'

This is the eleventh sonnet: the twelfth is full of vile and forced conceits, without any sentiment at all; such as calling the Sun 'the Goldsmith of the stars,' 'the enameller of the moon,' and 'the Apelles of the flowers.' This is as bad as Cowley or Sir Philip Sidney. Here is one that is worth a million of such quaint devices.

'*To the Nightingale.*

Dear chorister, who from these shadows sends,[2]
Ere that the blushing morn dare show her light,
Such sad lamenting strains, that night attends
(Become all ear[3]) stars stay to hear thy plight.
If one whose grief even reach of thought transcends,
Who ne'er (not in a dream) did taste delight,
May thee importune who like case pretends,
And seem'st to joy in woe, in woe's despite:
Tell me (so may thou milder fortune try,
And long, long sing!) for what thou thus complains,[2]
Since winter's gone, and sun in dappled sky
Enamour'd smiles on woods and flow'ry plains?
The bird, as if my questions did her move,
With trembling wings sigh'd forth, 'I love, I love.'

Or if a mixture of the Della Cruscan style be allowed to enshrine the true spirit of love and poetry, we have it in the following address to the river Forth, on which his mistress had embarked.

'Slide soft, fair Forth, and make a chrystal plain,
Cut your white locks, and on your foamy face
Let not a wrinkle be, when you embrace
The boat that earth's perfections doth contain.
Winds wonder, and through wondering hold your peace,
Or if that you your hearts cannot restrain
From sending sighs, feeling a lover's case,
Sigh, and in her fair hair yourselves enchain.

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[1] His mistress.
[2] Scotch for send'st, for complain'st, &c.
[3] 'I was all ear,' see Milton's Comus.

Or take these sighs, which absence makes arise
From my oppressed breast, and fill the sails,
Or some sweet breath new brought from Paradise.
The floods do smile, love o'er the winds prevails,
And yet huge waves arise; the cause is this,
The ocean strives with Forth the boat to kiss.'

This to the English reader will express the very soul of Petrarch, the molten breath of sentiment converted into the glassy essence of a set of glittering but still graceful conceits.

'The fly that sips treacle is lost in the sweets,' and the critic that tastes poetry, 'his ruin meets.' His feet are clogged with its honey, and his eyes blinded with its beauties; and he forgets his proper vocation, which is to buz and sting. I am afraid of losing my way in Drummond's 'sugar'd sonnetting;' and have determined more than once to break off abruptly; but another and another tempts the rash hand and curious eye, which I am loth not to give, and I give it accordingly: for if I did not write these Lectures to please myself, I am at least sure I should please nobody else. In fact, I conceive that what I have undertaken to do in this and former cases, is merely to read over a set of authors with the audience, as I would do with a friend, to point out a favourite passage, to explain an objection; or if a remark or a theory occurs, to state it in illustration of the subject, but neither to tire him nor puzzle myself with pedantic rules and pragmatical *formulas* of criticism that can do no good to any body. I do not come to the task with a pair of compasses or a ruler in my pocket, to see whether a poem is round or square, or to measure its mechanical dimensions, like a meter and alnager of poetry: it is not in my bond to look after excisable articles or contraband wares, or to exact severe penalties and forfeitures for trifling oversights, or to give formal notice of violent breaches of the three unities, of geography and chronology; or to distribute printed stamps and poetical licences (with blanks to be filled up) on Mount Parnassus. I do not come armed from top to toe with colons and semicolons, with glossaries and indexes, to adjust the spelling or reform the metre, or to prove by everlasting contradiction and querulous impatience, that former commentators did not know the meaning of their author, any more than I do, who am angry at them, only because I am out of humour with myself—as if the genius of poetry lay buried under the rubbish of the press; and the critic was the dwarf-enchanter who was to release its airy form from being stuck through with blundering points and misplaced commas; or to prevent its vital powers from being worm-eaten and consumed, letter by letter, in musty manuscripts and black-letter

print. I do not think that is the way to learn 'the gentle craft' of poesy or to teach it to others:—to imbibe or to communicate its spirit; which if it does not disentangle itself and soar above the obscure and trivial researches of antiquarianism is no longer itself, 'a Phœnix gazed by all.' At least, so it appeared to me (it is for others to judge whether I was right or wrong). In a word, I have endeavoured to feel what was good, and to 'give a reason for the faith that was in me' when necessary, and when in my power. This is what I have done, and what I must continue to do.

To return to Drummond.—I cannot but think that his Sonnets come as near as almost any others to the perfection of this kind of writing, which should embody a sentiment and every shade of a sentiment, as it varies with time and place and humour, with the extravagance or lightness of a momentary impression, and should, when lengthened out into a series, form a history of the wayward moods of the poet's mind, the turns of his fate; and imprint the smile or frown of his mistress in indelible characters on the scattered leaves. I will give the two following, and have done with this author.

'In vain I haunt the cold and silver springs,
To quench the fever burning in my veins:
In vain (love's pilgrim) mountains, dales, and plains
I over-run; vain help long absence brings.
In vain, my friends, your counsel me constrains
To fly, and place my thoughts on other things.
Ah, like the bird that fired hath her wings,
The more I move the greater are my pains.
Desire, alas! desire a Zeuxis new,
From the orient borrowing gold, from western skies
Heavenly cinnabar, sets before my eyes
In every place her hair, sweet look and hue;
That fly, run, rest I, all doth prove but vain;
My life lies in those eyes which have me slain.'

The other is a direct imitation of Petrarch's description of the bower where he first saw Laura.

'Alexis, here she stay'd, among these pines,
Sweet hermitress, she did alone repair:
Here did she spread the treasure of her hair,
More rich than that brought from the Colchian mines;
Here sat she by these musked eglantines;
The happy flowers seem yet the print to bear:
Her voice did sweeten here thy sugar'd lines,
To which winds, trees, beasts, birds, did lend an ear.

She here me first perceiv'd, and here a morn
Of bright carnations did o'erspread her face:
Here did she sigh, here first my hopes were born,
Here first I got a pledge of promised grace;
But ah! what serves to have been made happy so,
Sith passed pleasures double but new woe!'

I should, on the whole, prefer Drummond's Sonnets to Spenser's; and they leave Sidney's, picking their way through verbal intricacies and 'thorny queaches,'[1] at an immeasurable distance behind. Drummond's other poems have great, though not equal merit; anc he may be fairly set down as one of our old English classics.

Ben Jonson's detached poetry I like much, as indeed I do a about him, except when he degraded himself by 'the laborioı foolery' of some of his farcical characters, which he could not de with sportively, and only made stupid and pedantic. I have bee blamed for what I have said, more than once, in disparagement o Ben Jonson's comic humour; but I think he was himself aware ol his infirmity, and has (not improbably) alluded to it in the following speech of Crites in Cynthia's Revels.

'Oh, how despised and base a thing is man,
If he not strive to erect his groveling thoughts
Above the strain of flesh! But how more cheap,
When even his best and understanding part
(The crown and strength of all his faculties)
Floats like a dead-drown'd body, on the stream
Of vulgar humour, mix'd with common'st dregs:
I suffer for their guilt now; and my soul
(Like one that looks on ill-affected eyes)
Is hurt with mere intention on their follies.
Why will I view them then? my sense might ask me:
Or is't a rarity or some new object
That strains my strict observance to this point:
But such is the perverseness of our nature,
That if we once but fancy levity,
(How antic and ridiculous soever
It suit with us) yet will our muffled thought
Chuse rather not to see it than avoid it, &c.

Ben Jonson had self-knowledge and self-reflection enough to apply this to himself. His tenaciousness on the score of critical objections does not prove that he was not conscious of them himself, but the contrary. The greatest egotists are those whom it is impossible to offend, because they are wholly and incurably blind to their own

[1] Chapman's Hymn to Pan.

defects; or if they could be made to see them, would instantly convert them into so many beauty-spots and ornamental graces. Ben Jonson's fugitive and lighter pieces are not devoid of the characteristic merits of that class of composition; but still often in the happiest of them, there is a specific gravity in the author's pen, that sinks him to the bottom of his subject, though buoyed up for a time with art and painted plumes, and produces a strange mixture of the mechanical and fanciful, of poetry and prose, in his songs and odes. For instance, one of his most airy effusions is the Triumph of his Mistress: yet there are some lines in it that seem inserted almost by way of courlesque. It is however well worth repeating.

'See the chariot at hand here of love,
Wherein my lady rideth!
Each that draws it is a swan or a dove;
And well the car love guideth!
As she goes all hearts do duty
Unto her beauty:
And enamour'd, do wish so they might
But enjoy such a sight,
That they still were to run by her side,
Through swords, through seas, whither she would ride.
Do but look on her eyes, they do light
All that love's world compriseth!
Do but look on her hair, it is bright
As love's star when it riseth!
Do but mark, her forehead 's smoother
Than words that soothe her:
And from her arch'd brows, such a grace
Sheds itself through the face,
As alone there triumphs to the life
All the gain, all the good of the elements' strife.

Have you seen but a bright lily grow,
Before rude hands have touch'd it?
Ha' you mark'd but the fall of the snow
Before the soil hath smutch'd it?
Ha' you felt *the wool of beaver*?
Or swan's down ever?
Or have smelt o' the bud o' the briar?
Or *the nard in the fire*?
Or have tasted the bag of the bee?
Oh, so white! Oh so soft! Oh so sweet is she!'

His Discourse with Cupid, which follows, is infinitely delicate and *piquant*, and without one single blemish. It is a perfect 'nest of spicery.'

'Noblest Charis, you that are
Both my fortune and my star!
And do govern more my blood,
Than the various moon the flood!
Hear, what late discourse of you,
Love and I have had; and true.
'Mongst my Muses finding me,
Where he chanc't your name to see
Set, and to this softer strain;
'Sure,' said he, 'if I have brain,
This here sung can be no other,
By description, but my mother!
So hath Homer prais'd her hair;
So Anacreon drawn the air
Of her face, and made to rise,
Just about her sparkling eyes,
Both her brows, bent like my bow.
By her looks I do her know,
Which you call my shafts. And see!
Such my mother's blushes be,
As the bath your verse discloses
In her cheeks, of milk and roses;
Such as oft I wanton in.
And, above her even chin,
Have you plac'd the bank of kisses,
Where you say, men gather blisses,
Rip'ned with a breath more sweet,
Than when flowers and west-winds meet.
Nay, her white and polish'd neck,
With the lace that doth it deck,
Is my mother's! hearts of slain
Lovers, made into a chain!
And between each rising breast
Lies the valley, call'd my nest,
Where I sit and proyne my wings
After flight; and put new stings
To my shafts! Her very name
With my mother's is the same.'—
'I confess all,' I replied,
'And the glass hangs by her side,
And the girdle 'bout her waste,
All is Venus: save unchaste.
But, alas! thou seest the least
Of her good, who is the best
Of her sex; but could'st thou, Love,
Call to mind the forms, that strove
For the apple, and those three
Make in one, the same were she.
For this beauty yet doth hide

Something more than thou hast spied.
Outward grace weak love beguiles:
She is Venus when she smiles,
But she 's Juno when she walks,
And Minerva when she talks.'

In one of the songs in Cynthia's Revels, we find, amidst some very pleasing imagery, the origin of a celebrated line in modern poetry—

'Drip, drip, drip, drip, drip, &c,'

This has not even the merit of originality, which is hard upon it. Ben Jonson had said two hundred years before,

'Oh, I could still
(Like melting snow upon some craggy hill)
Drop, drop, drop, drop,
Since nature's pride is now a wither'd daffodil.'

His Ode to the Memory of Sir Lucius Cary and Sir H. Morrison, has been much admired, but I cannot but think it one of his most fantastical and perverse performances.

I cannot, for instance, reconcile myself to such stanzas as these.

—'Of which we priests and poets say
Such truths as we expect for happy men,
And there he lives with memory; and Ben

THE STAND

Jonson, who sung this of him, ere he went
Himself to rest,
Or taste a part of that full joy he meant
To have exprest,
In this bright asterism;
Where it were friendship's schism
(Were not his Lucius long with us to tarry)
To separate these twi—
Lights, the Dioscori;
And keep the one half from his Harry.
But fate doth so alternate the design,
While that in Heaven, this light on earth doth shine.'

This seems as if because he cannot without difficulty write smoothly, he becomes rough and crabbed in a spirit of defiance, like those persons who cannot behave well in company, and affect rudeness to show their contempt for the opinions of others.

His Epistles are particularly good, equally full of strong sense and sound feeling. They shew that he was not without friends, whom he

esteemed, and by whom he was deservedly esteemed in return. The controversy started about his character is an idle one, carried on in the mere spirit of contradiction, as if he were either made up entirely of gall, or dipped in 'the milk of human kindness.' There is no necessity or ground to suppose either. He was no doubt a sturdy, plain-spoken, honest, well-disposed man, inclining more to the severe than the amiable side of things; but his good qualities, learning, talents, and convivial habits preponderated over his defects of temper or manners; and in a course of friendship some difference of character, even a little roughness or acidity, may relish to the palate; and olives may be served up with effect as well as sweetmeats. Ben Jonson, even by his quarrels and jealousies, does not seem to have been curst with the last and damning disqualification for friendship, heartless indifference. He was also what is understood by a *good fellow*, fond of good cheer and good company: and the first step for others to enjoy your society, is for you to enjoy theirs. If any one can do without the world, it is certain that the world can do quite as well without him. His 'verses inviting a friend to supper,' give us as familiar an idea of his private habits and character as his Epistle to Michael Drayton, that to Selden, &c., his lines to the memory of Shakespear, and his noble prose eulogy on Lord Bacon, in his disgrace, do a favourable one.

Among the best of these (perhaps the very best) is the address to Sir Robert Wroth, which besides its manly moral sentiments, conveys a strikingly picturesque description of rural sports and manners at this interesting period.

'How blest art thou, canst love the country, Wroth,
Whether by choice, or fate, or both!
And though so near the city and the court,
Art ta'en with neither's vice nor sport:
That at great times, art no ambitious guest
Of sheriff's dinner, or of mayor's feast.
Nor com'st to view the better cloth of state;
The richer hangings, or the crown-plate;
Nor throng'st (when masquing is) to have a sight
Of the short bravery of the night;
To view the jewels, stuffs, the pains, the wit
There wasted, some not paid for yet!
But canst at home in thy securer rest,
Live with un-bought provision blest;
Free from proud porches or their guilded roofs,
'Mongst lowing herds and solid hoofs:
Along the curled woods and painted meads,
Through which a serpent river leads

To some cool courteous shade, which he calls his,
And makes sleep softer than it is!
Or if thou list the night in watch to break,
A-bed canst hear the loud stag speak,
In spring oft roused for their master's sport,
Who for it makes thy house his court;
Or with thy friends, the heart of all the year,
Divid'st upon the lesser deer;
In autumn, at the partrich mak'st a flight,
And giv'st thy gladder guests the sight;
And in the winter hunt'st the flying hare,
More for thy exercise than fare;
While all that follows, their glad ears apply
To the full greatness of the cry:
Or hawking at the river or the bush,
Or shooting at the greedy thrush,
Thou dost with some delight the day out-wear,
Although the coldest of the year!
The whil'st the several seasons thou hast seen
Of flow'ry fields, of copses green,
The mowed meadows, with the fleeced sheep,
And feasts that either shearers keep;
The ripened ears yet humble in their height,
And furrows laden with their weight;
The apple-harvest that doth longer last;
The hogs return'd home fat from mast;
The trees cut out in log; and those boughs made
A fire now, that lent a shade!
Thus Pan and Sylvan having had their rites,
Comus puts in for new delights;
And fills thy open hall with mirth and cheer,
As if in Saturn's reign it were;
Apollo's harp and Hermes' lyre resound,
Nor are the Muses strangers found:
The rout of rural folk come thronging in,
(Their rudeness then is thought no sin)
Thy noblest spouse affords them welcome grace;
And the great heroes of her race
Sit mixt with loss of state or reverence.
Freedom doth with degree dispense.
The jolly wassall walks the often round,
And in their cups their cares are drown'd:
They think not then which side the cause shall leese,
Nor how to get the lawyer fees.
Such, and no other was that age of old,
Which boasts t' have had the head of gold.
And such since thou canst make thine own content,
Strive, Wroth, to live long innocent.
Let others watch in guilty arms, and stand

The fury of a rash command,
Go enter breaches, meet the cannon's rage,
That they may sleep with scars in age.
And show their feathers shot and colours torn,
And brag that they were therefore born.
Let this man sweat, and wrangle at the bar
For every price in every jar
And change possessions oftener with his breath,
Than either money, war or death:
Let him, than hardest sires, more disinherit,
And each where boast it as his merit,
To blow up orphans, widows, and their states;
And think his power doth equal Fate's.
Let that go heap a mass of wretched wealth,
Purchas'd by rapine, worse than stealth,
And brooding o'er it sit, with broadest eyes,
Not doing good, scarce when he dies.
Let thousands more go flatter vice, and win,
By being organs to great sin,
Get place and honour, and be glad to keep
The secrets, that shall breake their sleep:
And, so they ride in purple, eat in plate,
Though poyson, think it a great fate.
But thou, my Wroth, if I can truth apply,
Shalt neither that, nor this envy:
Thy peace is made; and, when man's state is well,
'Tis better, if he there can dwell.
God wisheth none should wrack on a strange shelf;
To him man's dearer than t' himself.
And, howsoever we may think things sweet,
He alwayes gives what he knows meet;
Which who can use is happy: such be thou.
Thy morning's and thy evening's vow
Be thanks to him, and earnest prayer, to find
A body sound, with sounder mind;
To do thy country service, thy self right;
That neither want do thee affright,
Nor death; but when thy latest sand is spent,
Thou mayst think life a thing but lent.'

Of all the poetical Epistles of this period, however, that of Daniel to the Countess of Cumberland, for weight of thought and depth of feeling, bears the palm. The reader will not peruse this effusion with less interest or pleasure, from knowing that it is a favourite with Mr. Wordsworth.

'He that of such a height hath built his mind,
And rear'd the dwelling of his thoughts so strong,

As neither fear nor hope can shake the frame
Of his resolved pow'rs; nor all the wind
Of vanity or malice pierce to wrong
His settled peace, or to disturb the same:
What a fair seat hath he, from whence he may
The boundless wastes and wilds of man survey!
  And with how free an eye doth he look down
Upon these lower regions of turmoil,
Where all the storms of passions mainly beat
On flesh and blood: where honour, pow'r, renown,
Are only gay afflictions, golden toil;
Where greatness stands upon as feeble feet,
As frailty doth; and only great doth seem
To little minds, who do it so esteem.
  He looks upon the mightiest monarch's wars
But only as on stately robberies;
Where evermore the fortune that prevails
Must be the right: the ill-succeeding mars
The fairest and the best-fac'd enterprize.
Great pirate Pompey lesser pirates quails:
Justice, he sees (as if seduced) still
Conspires with pow'r, whose cause must not be ill.
  He sees the face of right t' appear as manifold
As are the passions of uncertain man.
Who puts it in all colours, all attires,
To serve his ends, and make his courses hold.
He sees, that let deceit work what it can,
Plot and contrive base ways to high desires;
That the all-guiding Providence doth yet
All disappoint, and mocks this smoke of wit.
  Nor is he mov'd with all the thunder-cracks
Of tyrants' threats, or with the surly brow
Of pow'r, that proudly sits on others' crimes:
Charg'd with more crying sins than those he checks.
The storms of sad confusion, that may grow
Up in the present for the coming times,
Appal not him; that hath no side at all,
But of himself, and knows the worst can fall.
  Although his heart (so near ally'd to earth)
Cannot but pity the perplexed state
Of troublous and distress'd mortality,
That thus make way unto the ugly birth
Of their own sorrows, and do still beget
Affliction upon imbecility:
Yet seeing thus the course of things must run,
He looks thereon not strange, but as fore-done.
  And whilst distraught ambition compasses,
And is encompass'd; whilst as craft deceives,
And is deceived; whilst man doth ransack man,

And builds on blood, and rises by distress;
And th' inheritance of desolation leaves
To great expecting hopes: he looks thereon,
As from the shore of peace, with unwet eye,
And bears no venture in impiety.'

Michael Drayton's Poly-Olbion is a work of great length and of unabated freshness and vigour in itself, though the monotony of the subject tires the reader. He describes each place with the accuracy of a topographer, and the enthusiasm of a poet, as if his Muse were the very *genius loci*. His Heroical Epistles are also excellent. He has a few lighter pieces, but none of exquisite beauty or grace. His mind is a rich marly soil that produces an abundant harvest, and repays the husbandman's toil, but few flaunting flowers, the garden's pride, grow in it, nor any poisonous weeds.

P. Fletcher's Purple Island is nothing but a long enigma, describing the body of a man, with the heart and veins, and the blood circulating in them, under the fantastic designation of the Purple Island.

The other Poets whom I shall mention, and who properly belong to the age immediately following, were William Brown, Carew, Crashaw, Herrick, and Marvell. Brown was a pastoral poet, with much natural tenderness and sweetness, and a good deal of allegorical quaintness and prolixity. Carew was an elegant court-trifler. Herrick was an amorist, with perhaps more fancy than feeling, though he has been called by some the English Anacreon. Crashaw was a hectic enthusiast in religion and in poetry, and erroneous in both. Marvell deserves to be remembered as a true poet as well as patriot, not in the best of times.—I will, however, give short specimens from each of these writers, that the reader may judge for himself; and be led by his own curiosity, rather than my recommendation, to consult the originals. Here is one by T. Carew.

'Ask me no more where Jove bestows,
When June is past, the fading rose:
For in your beauties, orient deep
These flow'rs, as in their causes, sleep.

Ask me no more, whither do stray
The golden atoms of the day;
For in pure love, Heaven did prepare
Those powders to enrich your hair.

Ask me no more, whither doth haste
The nightingale, when May is past;
For in your sweet dividing throat
She winters, and keeps warm her note.

Ask me no more, where those stars light,
That downwards fall in dead of night;
For in your eyes they sit, and there
Fixed become, as in their sphere.

Ask me no more, if east or west
The phœnix builds her spicy nest;
For unto you at last she flies,
And in your fragrant bosom dies.'

The Hue and Cry of Love, the Epitaphs on Lady Mary Villiers, and the Friendly Reproof to Ben Jonson for his angry Farewell to the stage, are in the author's best manner. We may perceive, however, a frequent mixture of the superficial and common-place, with far-fetched and improbable conceits.

Herrick is a writer who does not answer the expectations I had formed of him. He is in a manner a modern discovery, and so far has the freshness of antiquity about him. He is not trite and thread-bare. But neither is he likely to become so. He is a writer of epigrams, not of lyrics. He has point and ingenuity, but I think little of the spirit of love or wine. From his frequent allusion to pearls and rubies, one might take him for a lapidary instead of a poet. One of his pieces is entitled

'*The Rock of Rubies, and the Quarry of Pearls.*

Some ask'd me where the rubies grew;
    And nothing I did say;
But with my finger pointed to
    The lips of Julia.

Some ask'd how pearls did grow, and where;
    Then spoke I to my girl
To part her lips, and shew them there
    The quarrelets of pearl.'

Now this is making a petrefaction both of love and poetry.

His poems, from their number and size, are 'like the motes that play in the sun's beams;' that glitter to the eye of fancy, but leave no distinct impression on the memory. The two best are a translation of Anacreon, and a successful and spirited imitation of him.

'*The Wounded Cupid.*

Cupid, as he lay among
Roses, by a bee was stung.
Whereupon, in anger flying
To his mother said thus, crying,

Help, oh help, your boy 's a dying!
And why, my pretty lad? said she.
Then, blubbering, replied he,
A winged snake has bitten me,
Which country-people call a bee.
At which she smiled; then with her hairs
And kisses drying up his tears,
Alas, said she, my wag! if this
Such a pernicious torment is;
Come, tell me then, how great's the smart
Of those thou woundest with thy dart?'

The Captive Bee, or the Little Filcher, is his own.

'As Julia once a slumbering lay,
It chanced a bee did fly that way,
After a dew or dew-like show'r,
To tipple freely in a flow'r.
For some rich flow'r he took the lip
Of Julia, and began to sip:
But when he felt he suck'd from thence
Honey, and in the quintessence;
He drank so much he scarce could stir;
So Julia took the pilferer.
And thus surpris'd, as filchers use,
He thus began himself to excuse:
Sweet lady-flow'r! I never brought
Hither the least one thieving thought;
But taking those rare lips of yours
For some fresh, fragrant, luscious flow'rs,
I thought I might there take a taste,
Where so much syrup ran at waste:
Besides, know this, I never sting
The flow'r that gives me nourishing;
But with a kiss or thanks, do pay
For honey that I bear away.
This said, he laid his little scrip
Of honey 'fore her ladyship:
And told her, as some tears did fall,
That that he took, and that was all.
At which she smil'd, and bid him go,
And take his bag, but thus much know,
When next he came a pilfering so,
He should from her full lips derive
Honey enough to fill his hive.'

Of Marvell I have spoken with such praise, as appears to me his due, on another occasion: but the public are deaf, except to proof or to their own prejudices, and I will therefore give an example of the sweetness and power of his verse.

'*To his Coy Mistress.*

Had we but world enough, and time,
This coyness, Lady, were no crime.
We would sit down, and think which way
To walk, and pass our long love's day.
Thou by the Indian Ganges' side
Should'st rubies find : I by the tide
Of Humber would complain. I would
Love you ten years before the flood ;
And you should, if you please, refuse
Till the conversion of the Jews.
My vegetable love should grow
Vaster than empires, and more slow
An hundred years should go to praise
Thine eyes, and on thy forehead gaze;
Two hundred to adore each breast ;
But thirty thousand to the rest.
An age at least to every part,
And the last age should shew your heart.
For, Lady, you deserve this state ;
Nor would I love at lower rate.
 But at my back I always hear
Time's winged chariot hurrying near:
And yonder all before us lye
Desarts of vast eternity.
Thy beauty shall no more be found;
Nor in thy marble vault shall sound
My echoing song : then worms shall try
That long preserved virginity :
And your quaint honour turn to dust;
And into ashes all my lust.
The grave 's a fine and private place,
But none, I think, do there embrace.
 Now, therefore, while the youthful hue
Sits on thy skin like morning dew,
And while thy willing soul transpires
At every pore with instant fires,
Now let us sport us while we may;
And now, like amorous birds of prey,
Rather at once our time devour,
Than languish in his slow-chapp'd pow'r.
Let us roll all our strength, and all
Our sweetness, up into one ball ;
And tear our pleasures with rough strife,
Thorough the iron gates of life.
Thus, though we cannot make our sun
Stand still, yet we will make him run.'

ON MISCELLANEOUS POEMS, ETC.

In Brown's Pastorals, notwithstanding the weakness and prolixity of his general plan, there are repeated examples of single lines and passages of extreme beauty and delicacy, both of sentiment and description, such as the following Picture of Night.

> 'Clamour grew dumb, unheard was shepherd's song,
> And silence girt the woods: no warbling tongue
> Talk'd to the echo; Satyrs broke their dance,
> And all the upper world lay in a trance,
> Only the curled streams soft chidings kept;
> And little gales that from the green leaf swept
> Dry summer's dust, in fearful whisp'rings stirr'd,
> As loth to waken any singing bird.'

Poetical beauties of this sort are scattered, not sparingly, over the green lap of nature through almost every page of our author's writings. His description of the squirrel hunted by mischievous boys, of the flowers stuck in the windows like the hues of the rainbow, and innumerable others might be quoted.

His Philarete (the fourth song of the Shepherd's Pipe) has been said to be the origin of Lycidas: but there is no resemblance, except that both are pastoral elegies for the loss of a friend. The Inner Temple Mask has also been made the foundation of Comus, with as little reason. But so it is: if an author is once detected in borrowing, he will be suspected of plagiarism ever after: and every writer that finds an ingenious or partial editor, will be made to set up his claim of originality against him. A more serious charge of this kind has been urged against the principal character in Paradise Lost (that of Satan), which is said to have been taken from Marino, an Italian poet. Of this, we may be able to form some judgment, by a comparison with Crashaw's translation of Marino's Sospetto d'Herode. The description of Satan alluded to, is given in the following stanzas:

> 'Below the bottom of the great abyss,
> There where one centre reconciles all things,
> The world's profound heart pants; there placed is
> Mischief's old master; close about him clings
> A curl'd knot of embracing snakes, that kiss
> His correspondent cheeks; these loathsome strings
> Hold the perverse prince in eternal ties
> Fast bound, since first he forfeited the skies.
>
> The judge of torments, and the king of tears,
> He fills a burnish'd throne of quenchless fire;
> And for his old fair robes of light, he wears
> A gloomy mantle of dark flames; the tire

That crowns his hated head, on high appears;
Where seven tall horns (his empire's pride) aspire;
And to make up hell's majesty, each horn
Seven crested hydras horribly adorn.

His eyes, the sullen dens of death and night,
Startle the dull air with a dismal red;
Such his fell glances as the fatal light
Of staring comets, that look kingdoms dead.
From his black nostrils and blue lips, in spite
Of hell's own stink, a worser stench is spread.
His breath hell's lightning is; and each deep groan
Disdains to think that heaven thunders alone.

His flaming eyes' dire exhalation
Unto a dreadful pile gives fiery breath;
Whose unconsum'd consumption preys upon
The never-dying life of a long death.
In this sad house of slow destruction
(His shop of flames) he fries himself, beneath
A mass of woes; his teeth for torment gnash,
While his steel sides sound with his tail's strong lash.'

This portrait of monkish superstition does not equal the grandeur of Milton's description.

——' His form had not yet lost
All her original brightness, nor appear'd
Less than archangel ruin'd and the excess
Of glory obscured.'

Milton has got rid of the horns and tail, the vulgar and physical *insignia* of the devil, and clothed him with other greater and intellectual terrors, reconciling beauty and sublimity, and converting the grotesque and deformed into the *ideal* and classical. Certainly Milton's mind rose superior to all others in this respect, on the outstretched wings of philosophic contemplation, in not confounding the depravity of the will with physical distortion, or supposing that the distinctions of good and evil were only to be subjected to the gross ordeal of the senses. In the subsequent stanzas, we however find the traces of some of Milton's boldest imagery, though its effect is injured by the incongruous mixture above stated.

'Struck with these great concurrences of things,[1]
Symptoms so deadly unto death and him;
Fain would he have forgot what fatal strings
Eternally bind each rebellious limb.

[1] Alluding to the fulfilment of the prophecies and the birth of the Messiah.

He shook himself, and spread his spacious wings,
Which like two bosom'd sails[1] embrace the dim
Air, with a dismal shade, but all in vain;
Of sturdy adamant is his strong chain.

While thus heav'n's highest counsels, by the low
Footsteps of their effects, he traced too well,
He tost his troubled eyes, embers that glow
Now with new rage, and wax too hot for hell.
With his foul claws he fenced his furrow'd brow,
And gave a ghastly shriek, whose horrid yell
Ran trembling through the hollow vaults of night.'

The poet adds—

'The while his twisted tail he knaw'd for spite.'

There is no keeping in this. This action of meanness and mere vulgar spite, common to the most contemptible creatures, takes away from the terror and power just ascribed to the prince of Hell, and implied in the nature of the consequences attributed to his every movement of mind or body. Satan's soliloquy to himself is more beautiful and more in character at the same time.

'Art thou not Lucifer? he to whom the droves
Of stars that gild the morn in charge were given?
The nimblest of the lightning-winged loves?
The fairest and the first-born smile of Heav'n?
Look in what pomp the mistress planet moves,
Reverently circled by the lesser seven:
Such and so rich the flames that from thine eyes
Opprest the common people of the skies?
Ah! wretch! what boots it to cast back thine eyes
Where dawning hope no beam of comfort shews?' &c.

This is true beauty and true sublimity: it is also true pathos and morality: for it interests the mind, and affects it powerfully with the idea of glory tarnished, and happiness forfeited with the loss of virtue: but from the horns and tail of the brute-demon, imagination cannot reascend to the Son of the morning, nor be dejected by the transition from weal to woe, which it cannot, without a violent effort, picture to itself.

In our author's account of Cruelty, the chief minister of Satan, there is also a considerable approach to Milton's description of Death and Sin, the portress of hell-gates.

'Thrice howl'd the caves of night, and thrice the sound,
Thundering upon the banks of those black lakes,

[1] 'He spreads his sail-broad vans.'—Par. Lost, b. ii. l. 927.

Rung through the hollow vaults of hell profound;
At last her listening ears the noise o'ertakes,
She lifts her sooty lamps, and looking round,
A general hiss,[1] from the whole tire of snakes
Rebounding through hell's inmost caverns came,
In answer to her formidable name.

'Mongst all the palaces in hell's command,
No one so merciless as this of hers,
The adamantine doors forever stand
Impenetrable, both to prayers and tears.
The wall's inexorable steel, no hand
Of time, or teeth of hungry ruin fears.'

On the whole, this poem, though Milton has undoubtedly availed himself of many ideas and passages in it, raises instead of lowering our conception of him, by shewing how much more he added to it than he has taken from it.

Crashaw's translation of Strada's description of the Contention between a nightingale and a musician, is elaborate and spirited, but not equal to Ford's version of the same story in his Lover's Melancholy. One line may serve as a specimen of delicate quaintness, and of Crashaw's style in general.

'And with a quavering coyness tastes the strings.'

Sir Philip Sidney is a writer for whom I cannot acquire a taste. As Mr. Burke said, 'he could not love the French Republic'—so I may say, that I cannot love the Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia, with all my good-will to it. It will not do for me, however, to imitate the summary petulance of the epigrammatist.

'The reason why I cannot tell,
But I don't like you, Dr. Fell.'

I must give my reasons, 'on compulsion,' for not speaking well of a person like Sir Philip Sidney—

'The soldier's, scholar's, courtier's eye, tongue, sword,
The glass of fashion, and the mould of form;'

the splendour of whose personal accomplishments, and of whose wide-spread fame was, in his life time,

——'Like a gate of steel,
Fronting the sun, that renders back
His figure and his heat'—

[1] See Satan's reception on his return to Pandemonium, in book x. of Paradise Lost.

a writer too who was universally read and enthusiastically admired for a century after his death, and who has been admired with scarce less enthusiastic, but with a more distant homage, for another century, after ceasing to be read.

We have lost the art of reading, or the privilege of writing, voluminously, since the days of Addison. Learning no longer weaves the interminable page with patient drudgery, nor ignorance pores over it with implicit faith. As authors multiply in number, books diminish in size; we cannot now, as formerly, swallow libraries whole in a single folio: solid quarto has given place to slender duodecimo, and the dingy letter-press contracts its dimensions, and retreats before the white, unsullied, faultless margin. Modern authorship is become a species of stenography: we contrive even to read by proxy. We skim the cream of prose without any trouble; we get at the quintessence of poetry without loss of time. The staple commodity, the coarse, heavy, dirty, unwieldy bullion of books is driven out of the market of learning, and the intercourse of the literary world is carried on, and the credit of the great capitalists sustained by the flimsy circulating medium of magazines and reviews. Those who are chiefly concerned in catering for the taste of others, and serving up critical opinions in a compendious, elegant, and portable form, are not forgetful of themselves: they are not scrupulously solicitous, idly inquisitive about the real merits, the *bona fide* contents of the works they are deputed to appraise and value, any more than the reading public who employ them. They look no farther for the contents of the work than the title page, and pronounce a peremptory decision on its merits or defects by a glance at the name and party of the writer. This state of polite letters seems to admit of improvement in only one respect, which is to go a step further, and write for the amusement and edification of the world, accounts of works that were never either written or read at all, and to cry up or abuse the authors by name, although they have no existence but in the critic's invention. This would save a great deal of labour in vain: anonymous critics might pounce upon the defenceless heads of fictitious candidates for fame and bread; reviews, from being novels founded upon facts, would aspire to be pure romances; and we should arrive at the *beau ideal* of a commonwealth of letters, at the euthanasia of thought, and Millennium of criticism!

At the time that Sir Philip Sidney's Arcadia was written, those middle men, the critics, were not known. The author and reader came into immediate contact, and seemed never tired of each other's company. We are more fastidious and dissipated: the effeminacy of modern taste would, I am afraid, shrink back affrighted at the

formidable sight of this once popular work, which is about as long (*horresco referens!*) as all Walter Scott's novels put together; but besides its size and appearance, it has, I think, other defects of a more intrinsic and insuperable nature. It is to me one of the greatest monuments of the abuse of intellectual power upon record. It puts one in mind of the court dresses and preposterous fashions of the time which are grown obsolete and disgusting. It is not romantic, but scholastic; not poetry, but casuistry; not nature, but art, and the worst sort of art, which thinks it can do better than nature. Of the number of fine things that are constantly passing through the author's mind, there is hardly one that he has not contrived to spoil, and to spoil purposely and maliciously, in order to aggrandize our idea of himself. Out of five hundred folio pages, there are hardly, I conceive, half a dozen sentences expressed simply and directly, with the sincere desire to convey the image implied, and without a systematic interpolation of the wit, learning, ingenuity, wisdom and everlasting impertinence of the writer, so as to disguise the object, instead of displaying it in its true colours and real proportions. Every page is 'with centric and eccentric scribbled o'er;' his Muse is tattooed and tricked out like an Indian goddess. He writes a court-hand, with flourishes like a schoolmaster; his figures are wrought in chain-stitch. All his thoughts are forced and painful births, and may be said to be delivered by the Cæsarean operation. At last, they become distorted and ricketty in themselves; and before they have been cramped and twisted and swaddled into lifelessness and deformity. Imagine a writer to have great natural talents, great powers of memory and invention, an eye for nature, a knowledge of the passions, much learning and equal industry; but that he is so full of a consciousness of all this, and so determined to make the reader conscious of it at every step, that he becomes a complete intellectual coxcomb or nearly so;—that he never lets a casual observation pass without perplexing it with an endless, running commentary, that he never states a feeling without so many *circumambages*, without so many interlineations and parenthetical remarks on all that can be said for it, and anticipations of all that can be said against it, and that he never mentions a fact without giving so many circumstances and conjuring up so many things that it is like or not like, that you lose the main clue of the story in its infinite ramifications and intersections; and we may form some faint idea of the Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia, which is spun with great labour out of the author's brains, and hangs like a huge cobweb over the face of nature! This is not, as far as I can judge, an exaggerated description: but as near the truth as I can make it. The proofs are not far to seek. Take the first sentence, or open the

volume any where and read. I will, however, take one of the most beautiful passages near the beginning, to shew how the subject-matter, of which the noblest use might have been made, is disfigured by the affectation of the style, and the importunate and vain activity of the writer's mind. The passage I allude to, is the celebrated description of Arcadia.

'So that the third day after, in the time that the morning did strew roses and violets in the heavenly floor against the coming of the sun, the nightingales (striving one with the other which could in most dainty variety recount their wrong-caused sorrow) made them put off their sleep, and rising from under a tree (which that night had been their pavilion) they went on their journey, which by and by welcomed Musidorus' eyes (wearied with the wasted soil of Laconia) with welcome prospects. There were hills which garnished their proud heights with stately trees: humble valleys whose base estate seemed comforted with the refreshing of silver rivers; meadows enamelled with all sorts of eye-pleasing flowers; thickets, which being lined with most pleasant shade were witnessed so to, by the cheerful disposition of many well-tuned birds; each pasture stored with sheep feeding with sober security, while the pretty lambs with bleating oratory craved the dam's comfort; here a shepherd's boy piping, as though he should never be old: there a young shepherdess knitting, and withal singing, and it seemed that her voice comforted her hands to work, and her hands kept time to her voice-music. As for the houses of the country (for many houses came under their eye) they were scattered, no two being one by the other, and yet not so far off, as that it barred mutual succour; a shew, as it were, of an accompaniable solitariness, and of a civil wildness. I pray you, said Musidorus, (then first unsealing his long-silent lips) what countries be these we pass through, which are so divers in shew, the one wanting no store, the other having no store but of want. The country, answered Claius, where you were cast ashore, and now are past through is Laconia: but this country (where you now set your foot) is Arcadia.'

One would think the very name might have lulled his senses to delightful repose in some still, lonely valley, and have laid the restless spirit of Gothic quaintness, witticism, and conceit in the lap of classic elegance and pastoral simplicity. Here are images too of touching beauty and everlasting truth that needed nothing but to be simply and nakedly expressed to have made a picture equal (nay superior) to the allegorical representation of the Four Seasons of Life by Georgioni. But no! He cannot let his imagination or that of the reader dwell for a moment on the beauty or power of the real object. He thinks nothing is done, unless it is his doing. He must officiously and gratuitously interpose between you and the subject as the Cicerone of Nature, distracting the eye and the mind by continual uncalled-for interruptions, analysing, dissecting, disjointing, murdering every thing,

and reading a pragmatical, self-sufficient lecture over the dead body of nature. The moving spring of his mind is not sensibility or imagination, but dry, literal, unceasing craving after intellectual excitement, which is indifferent to pleasure or pain, to beauty or deformity, and likes to owe everything to its own perverse efforts rather than the sense of power in other things. It constantly interferes to perplex and neutralise. It never leaves the mind in a wise passiveness. In the infancy of taste, the froward pupils of art took nature to pieces, as spoiled children do a watch, to see what was in it. After taking it to pieces they could not, with all their cunning, put it together again, so as to restore circulation to the heart, or its living hue to the face! The quaint and pedantic style here objected to was not however the natural growth of untutored fancy, but an artificial excrescence transferred from logic and rhetoric to poetry. It was not owing to the excess of imagination, but of the want of it, that is, to the predominance of the mere understanding or dialectic faculty over the imaginative and the sensitive. It is in fact poetry degenerating at every step into prose, sentiment entangling itself in a controversy, from the habitual leaven of polemics and casuistry in the writer's mind. The poet insists upon matters of fact from the beauty or grandeur that accompanies them; our prose-poet insists upon them because they are matters of fact, and buries the beauty and grandeur in a heap of common rubbish, 'like two grains of wheat in a bushel of chaff.' The true poet illustrates for ornament or use: the fantastic pretender, only because he is not easy till he can translate every thing out of itself into something else. Imagination consists in enriching one idea by another, which has the same feeling or set of associations belonging to it in a higher or more striking degree; the quaint or scholastic style consists in comparing one thing to another by the mere process of abstraction, and the more forced and naked the comparison, the less of harmony or congruity there is in it, the more wire-drawn and ambiguous the link of generalisation by which objects are brought together, the greater is the triumph of the false and fanciful style. There was a marked instance of the difference in some lines from Ben Jonson which I have above quoted, and which, as they are alternate examples of the extremes of both in the same author and in the same short poem, there can be nothing invidious in giving. In conveying an idea of female softness and sweetness, he asks—

'Have you felt the wool of the beaver,
Or swan's down ever?
Or smelt of the bud of the briar,
Or the nard in the fire?'

Now 'the swan's down' is a striking and beautiful image of the most delicate and yielding softness; but we have no associations of a pleasing sort with the wool of the beaver. The comparison is dry, hard, and barren of effect. It may establish the matter of fact, but detracts from and impairs the sentiment. The smell of 'the bud of the briar' is a double-distilled essence of sweetness: besides, there are all the other concomitant ideas of youth, beauty, and blushing modesty, which blend with and heighten the immediate feeling: but the poetical reader was not bound to know even what *nard* is (it is merely a learned substance, a non-entity to the imagination) nor whether it has a fragrant or disagreeable scent when thrown into the fire, till Ben Jonson went out of his way to give him this pedantic piece of information. It is a mere matter of fact or of experiment; and while the experiment is making in reality or fancy, the sentiment stands still; or even taking it for granted in the literal and scientific sense, we are where we were; it does not enhance the passion to be expressed: we have no love for the smell of nard in the fire, but we have an old, a long-cherished one, from infancy, for the bud of the briar. Sentiment, as Mr. Burke said of nobility, is a thing of inveterate prejudice, and cannot be created, as some people (learned and unlearned) are inclined to suppose, out of fancy or out of any thing by the wit of man. The artificial and natural style do not alternate in this way in the Arcadia: the one is but the Helot, the eyeless drudge of the other. Thus even in the above passage, which is comparatively beautiful and simple in its general structure, we have 'the bleating oratory' of lambs, as if anything could be more unlike oratory than the bleating of lambs; we have a young shepherdess knitting, whose hands keep time not to her voice, but to her 'voice-music,' which introduces a foreign and questionable distinction, merely to perplex the subject; we have meadows enamelled with all sorts of 'eye-pleasing flowers,' as if it were necessary to inform the reader that flowers pleased the eye, or as if they did not please any other sense: we have valleys refreshed 'with *silver* streams,' an epithet that has nothing to do with the refreshment here spoken of: we have 'an accompaniable solitariness and a civil wildness,' which are a pair of very laboured antitheses; in fine, we have 'want of store, and store of want.'

Again, the passage describing the shipwreck of Pyrochles, has been much and deservedly admired: yet it is not free from the same inherent faults.

'But a little way off they saw the mast (of the vessel) whose proud height now lay along, like a widow having lost her mate, of whom she held her honour;' [This needed explanation] 'but upon the mast they saw

a young man (at least if it were a man) bearing show of about eighteen years of age, who sat (as on horseback) having nothing upon him but his shirt, which being wrought with blue silk and gold, had a kind of resemblance to the sea' [This is a sort of alliteration in natural history] 'on which the sun (then near his western home) did shoot some of his beams. His hair, (which the young men of Greece used to wear very long) was stirred up and down with the wind, which seemed to have a sport to play with it, as the sea had to kiss his feet; himself full of admirable beauty, set forth by the strangeness both of his seat and gesture; for holding his head up full of unmoved majesty, he held a sword aloft with his fair arm, which often he waved about his crown, as though he would threaten the world in that extremity.'

If the original sin of alliteration, antithesis, and metaphysical conceit could be weeded out of this passage, there is hardly a more heroic one to be found in prose or poetry.

Here is one more passage marred in the making. A shepherd is supposed to say of his mistress,

'Certainly, as her eyelids are more pleasant to behold, than two white kids climbing up a fair tree and browsing on his tenderest branches, and yet are nothing, compared to the day-shining stars contained in them; and as her breath is more sweet than a gentle south-west wind, which comes creeping over flowery fields and shadowed waters in the extreme heat of summer; and yet is nothing compared to the honey-flowing speech that breath doth carry; no more all that our eyes can see of her (though when they have seen her, what else they shall ever see is but dry stubble after clover grass) is to be matched with the flock of unspeakable virtues, laid up delightfully in that best-builded fold.'

Now here are images of singular beauty and of Eastern originality and daring, followed up with enigmatical or unmeaning commonplaces, because he never knows when to leave off, and thinks he can never be too wise or too dull for his reader. He loads his prose Pegasus, like a pack-horse, with all that comes and with a number of little trifling circumstances, that fall off, and you are obliged to stop to pick them up by the way. He cannot give his imagination a moment's pause, thinks nothing done, while any thing remains to do, and exhausts nearly all that can be said upon a subject, whether good, bad, or indifferent. The above passages are taken from the beginning of the Arcadia, when the author's style was hardly yet formed. The following is a less favourable, but fairer specimen of the work. It is the model of a love-letter, and is only longer than that of Adriano de Armada, in Love's Labour Lost.

'Most blessed paper, which shalt kiss that hand, whereto all blessedness is in nature a servant, do not yet disdain to carry with thee the woeful

words of a miser now despairing: neither be afraid to appear before her, bearing the base title of the sender. For no sooner shall that divine hand touch thee, but that thy baseness shall be turned to most high preferment. Therefore mourn boldly my ink: for while she looks upon you, your blackness will shine: cry out boldly my lamentation, for while she reads you, your cries will be music. Say then (O happy messenger of a most unhappy message) that the too soon born and too late dying creature, which dares not speak, no, not look, no, not scarcely think (as from his miserable self unto her heavenly highness), only presumes to desire thee (in the time that her eyes and voice do exalt thee) to say, and in this manner to say, not from him, oh no, that were not fit, but of him, thus much unto her sacred judgment. O you, the only honour to women, to men the only admiration, you that being armed by love, defy him that armed you, in this high estate wherein you have placed me' [*i.e.* the letter] 'yet let me remember him to whom I am bound for bringing me to your presence: and let me remember him, who (since he is yours, how mean soever he be) it is reason you have an account of him. The wretch (yet your wretch) though with languishing steps runs fast to his grave; and will you suffer a temple (how poorly built soever, but yet a temple of your deity) to be rased? But he dyeth: it is most true, he dyeth: and he in whom you live, to obey you, dyeth. Whereof though he plain, he doth not complain, for it is a harm, but no wrong, which he hath received. He dies, because in woeful language all his senses tell him, that such is your pleasure: for if you will not that he live, alas, alas, what followeth, what followeth of the most ruined Dorus, but his end? End, then, evil-destined Dorus, end; and end thou woeful letter, end: for it sufficeth her wisdom to know, that her heavenly will shall be accomplished.' Lib. ii. p. 117.

This style relishes neither of the lover nor the poet. Nine-tenths of the work are written in this manner. It is in the very manner of those books of gallantry and chivalry, which, with the labyrinths of their style, and 'the reason of their unreasonableness,' turned the fine intellects of the Knight of La Mancha. In a word (and not to speak it profanely), the Arcadia is a riddle, a rebus, an acrostic in folio: it contains about 4000 far-fetched similes, and 6000 impracticable dilemmas, about 10,000 reasons for doing nothing at all, and as many more against it; numberless alliterations, puns' questions and commands, and other figures of rhetoric; about a score good passages, that one may turn to with pleasure, and the most involved, irksome, improgressive, and heteroclite subject that ever was chosen to exercise the pen or patience of man. It no longer adorns the toilette or lies upon the pillow of Maids of Honour and Peeresses in their own right (the Pamelas and Philocleas of a later age), but remains upon the shelves of the libraries of the curious in long works and great names, a monument to shew that the author was one of the ablest men and worst writers of the age of Elizabeth.

His Sonnets, inlaid in the Arcadia, are jejune, far-fetched and frigid. I shall select only one that has been much commended. It is to the High Way where his mistress had passed, a strange subject, but not unsuitable to the author's genius.

> 'High-way, since you my chief Parnassus be,
> And that my Muse (to some ears not unsweet)
> Tempers her words to trampling horses' feet
> More oft than to a chamber melody;
> Now blessed you bear onward blessed me
> To her, where I my heart safe left shall meet;
> My Muse, and I must you of duty greet
> With thanks and wishes, wishing thankfully.
> Be you still fair, honour'd by public heed,
> By no encroachment wrong'd, nor time forgot;
> Nor blamed for blood, nor shamed for sinful deed;
> And that you know, I envy you no lot
> Of highest wish, I wish you so much bliss,
> Hundreds of years you Stella's feet may kiss.'

The answer of the High-way has not been preserved, but the sincerity of this appeal must no doubt have moved the stocks and stones to rise and sympathise. His Defence of Poetry is his most readable performance; there he is quite at home, in a sort of special pleader's office, where his ingenuity, scholastic subtlety, and tenaciousness in argument stand him in good stead; and he brings off poetry with flying colours; for he was a man of wit, of sense, and learning, though not a poet of true taste or unsophisticated genius.

LECTURE VII

CHARACTER OF LORD BACON'S WORKS—COMPARED AS TO STYLE WITH SIR THOMAS BROWN AND JEREMY TAYLOR.

Lord Bacon has been called (and justly) one of the wisest of mankind. The word *wisdom* characterises him more than any other. It was not that he did so much himself to advance the knowledge of man or nature, as that he saw what others had done to advance it, and what was still wanting to its full accomplishment. He stood upon the high 'vantage ground of genius and learning; and traced, 'as in a map the voyager his course,' the long devious march of human intellect, its elevations and depressions, its windings and its

errors. He had a 'large discourse of reason, looking before and after.' He had made an exact and extensive survey of human acquirements: he took the gauge and meter, the depths and soundings of the human capacity. He was master of the comparative anatomy of the mind of man, of the balance of power among the different faculties. He had thoroughly investigated and carefully registered the steps and processes of his own thoughts, with their irregularities and failures, their liabilities to wrong conclusions, either from the difficulties of the subject, or from moral causes, from prejudice, indolence, vanity, from conscious strength or weakness; and he applied this self-knowledge on a mighty scale to the general advances or retrograde movements of the aggregate intellect of the world. He knew well what the goal and crown of moral and intellectual power was, how far men had fallen short of it, and how they came to miss it. He had an instantaneous perception of the quantity of truth or good in any given system; and of the analogy of any given result or principle to others of the same kind scattered through nature or history. His observations take in a larger range, have more profundity from the fineness of his tact, and more comprehension from the extent of his knowledge, along the line of which his imagination ran with equal celerity and certainty, than any other person's, whose writings I know. He however seized upon these results, rather by intuition than by inference: he knew them in their mixed modes, and combined effects rather than by abstraction or analysis, as he explains them to others, not by resolving them into their component parts and elementary principles, so much as by illustrations drawn from other things operating in like manner, and producing similar results; or as he himself has finely expressed it, 'by the same footsteps of nature treading or printing upon several subjects or matters.' He had great sagacity of observation, solidity of judgment and scope of fancy; in this resembling Plato and Burke, that he was a popular philosopher and a philosophical declaimer. His writings have the gravity of prose with the fervour and vividness of poetry. His sayings have the effect of axioms, are at once striking and self-evident. He views objects from the greatest height, and his reflections acquire a sublimity in proportion to their profundity, as in deep wells of water we see the sparkling of the highest fixed stars. The chain of thought reaches to the centre, and ascends the brightest heaven of invention. Reason in him works like an instinct: and his slightest suggestions carry the force of conviction. His opinions are judicial. His induction of particulars is alike wonderful for learning and vivacity, for curiosity and dignity, and an all-pervading intellect binds the whole together in a graceful and pleasing form. His style is equally sharp and sweet,

flowing and pithy, condensed and expansive, expressing volumes in a sentence, or amplifying a single thought into pages of rich, glowing, and delightful eloquence. He had great liberality from seeing the various aspects of things (there was nothing bigotted or intolerant or exclusive about him) and yet he had firmness and decision from feeling their weight and consequences. His character was then an amazing insight into the limits of human knowledge and acquaintance with the landmarks of human intellect, so as to trace its past history or point out the path to future enquirers, but when he quits the ground of contemplation of what others have done or left undone to project himself into future discoveries, he becomes quaint and fantastic, instead of original. His strength was in reflection, not in production: he was the surveyor, not the builder of the fabric of science. He had not strictly the constructive faculty. He was the principal pioneer in the march of modern philosophy, and has completed the education and discipline of the mind for the acquisition of truth, by explaining all the impediments or furtherances that can be applied to it or cleared out of its way. In a word, he was one of the greatest men this country has to boast, and his name deserves to stand, where it is generally placed, by the side of those of our greatest writers, whether we consider the variety, the strength or splendour of his faculties, for ornament or use.

His Advancement of Learning is his greatest work; and next to that, I like the Essays; for the Novum Organum is more laboured and less effectual than it might be. I shall give a few instances from the first of these chiefly, to explain the scope of the above remarks.

The Advancement of Learning is dedicated to James I. and he there observes, with a mixture of truth and flattery, which looks very much like a bold irony,

'I am well assured that this which I shall say is no amplification at all, but a positive and measured truth; which is, that there hath not been, since Christ's time, any king or temporal monarch, which hath been so learned in all literature and erudition, divine and human (as your majesty). For let a man seriously and diligently revolve and peruse the succession of the Emperours of Rome, of which Cæsar the Dictator, who lived some years before Christ, and Marcus Antoninus were the best-learned; and so descend to the Emperours of Grecia, or of the West, and then to the lines of France, Spain, England, Scotland, and the rest, and he shall find his judgment is truly made. For it seemeth much in a king, if by the compendious extractions of other men's wits and labour, he can take hold of any superficial ornaments and shews of learning, or if he countenance and prefer learning and learned men: but to drink indeed of the true fountain of learning, nay, to have such a fountain of learning in himself, in a king, and in a king born, is almost a miracle.'

To any one less wrapped up in self-sufficiency than James, the rule would have been more staggering than the exception could have been gratifying. But Bacon was a sort of prose-laureat to the reigning prince, and his loyalty had never been suspected.

In recommending learned men as fit counsellors in a state, he thus points out the deficiencies of the mere empiric or man of business in not being provided against uncommon emergencies.—'Neither,' he says, 'can the experience of one man's life furnish examples and precedents for the events of one man's life. For as it happeneth sometimes, that the grand-child, or other descendant, resembleth the ancestor more than the son: so many times occurrences of present times may sort better with ancient examples, than with those of the latter or immediate times; and lastly, the wit of one man can no more countervail learning, than one man's means can hold way with a common purse.'—This is finely put. It might be added, on the other hand, by way of caution, that neither can the wit or opinion of one learned man set itself up, as it sometimes does, in opposition to the common sense or experience of mankind.

When he goes on to vindicate the superiority of the scholar over the mere politician in disinterestedness and inflexibility of principle, by arguing ingeniously enough—'The corrupter sort of mere politiques, that have not their thoughts established by learning in the love and apprehension of duty, nor never look abroad into universality, do refer all things to themselves, and thrust themselves into the centre of the world, as if all times should meet in them and their fortunes, never caring in all tempests what becomes of the ship of estates, so they may save themselves in the cock-boat of their own fortune, whereas men that feel the weight of duty, and know the limits of self-love, use to make good their places and duties, though with peril' —I can only wish that the practice were as constant as the theory is plausible, or that the time gave evidence of as much stability and sincerity of principle in well-educated minds as it does of versatility and gross egotism in self-taught men. I need not give the instances, 'they will receive' (in our author's phrase) 'an open allowance:' but I am afraid that neither habits of abstraction nor the want of them will entirely exempt men from a bias to their own interest; that it is neither learning nor ignorance that thrusts us into the centre of our own little world, but that it is nature that has put a man there!

His character of the school-men is perhaps the finest philosophical sketch that ever was drawn. After observing that there are 'two marks and badges of suspected and falsified science; the one, the novelty or strangeness of terms, the other the strictness of positions,

which of necessity doth induce oppositions, and so questions and altercations'—he proceeds—'Surely like as many substances in nature which are solid, do putrify and corrupt into worms: so it is the property of good and sound knowledge to putrify and dissolve into a number of subtle, idle, unwholesome, and (as I may term them) *vermiculate* questions: which have indeed a kind of quickness and life of spirit, but no soundness of matter or goodness of quality. This kind of degenerate learning did chiefly reign amongst the school-men, who having sharp and strong wits, and abundance of leisure, and small variety of reading; but their wits being shut up in the cells of a few authors (chiefly Aristotle their dictator) as their persons were shut up in the cells of monasteries and colleges, and knowing little history, either of nature or time, did out of no great quantity of matter, and infinite agitation of wit, spin out unto us those laborious webs of learning, which are extant in their books. For the wit and mind of man, if it work upon matter, which is the contemplation of the creatures of God, worketh according to the stuff, and is limited thereby: but if it work upon itself, as the spider worketh his web, then it is endless, and brings forth indeed cobwebs of learning, admirable for the fineness of thread and work, but of no substance or profit.'

And a little further on, he adds—'Notwithstanding, certain it is, that if those school-men to their great thirst of truth and unwearied travel of wit, had joined variety and universality of reading and contemplation, they had proved excellent lights, to the great advancement of all learning and knowledge; but as they are, they are great undertakers indeed, and fierce with dark keeping. But as in the inquiry of the divine truth, their pride inclined to leave the oracle of God's word, and to varnish in the mixture of their own inventions; so in the inquisition of nature, they ever left the oracle of God's works, and adored the deceiving and deformed images, which the unequal mirror of their own minds, or a few received authors or principles did represent unto them.'

One of his acutest (I might have said profoundest) remarks relates to the near connection between deceiving and being deceived. Volumes might be written in explanation of it. 'This vice therefore,' he says, 'brancheth itself into two sorts; delight in deceiving, and aptness to be deceived, imposture and credulity; which although they appear to be of a diverse nature, the one seeming to proceed of cunning, and the other of simplicity, yet certainly they do for the most part concur. For as the verse noteth *Percontatorem fugito, nam garrulus idem est;* an inquisitive man is a prattler: so upon the like reason, a credulous man is a deceiver; as we see it in fame, that he

that will easily believe rumours, will as easily augment rumours, and add somewhat to them of his own, which Tacitus wisely noteth, when he saith, *Fingunt simul creduntque*, so great an affinity hath fiction and belief.'

I proceed to his account of the causes of error, and directions for the conduct of the understanding, which are admirable both for their speculative ingenuity and practical use.

'The first of these,' says Lord Bacon, 'is the extreme affection of two extremities; the one antiquity, the other novelty, wherein it seemeth the children of time do take after the nature and malice of the father. For as he devoureth his children; so one of them seeketh to devour and suppress the other; while antiquity envieth there should be new additions, and novelty cannot be content to add, but it must deface. Surely, the advice of the prophet is the true direction in this respect, *state super vias antiquas, et videte quænam sit via recta et bona, et ambulate in ea.* Antiquity deserveth that reverence, that men should make a stand thereupon, and discover what is the best way, but when the discovery is well taken, then to take progression. And to speak truly,' he adds, '*Antiquitas seculi juventus mundi.* These times are the ancient times when the world is ancient; and not those which we count ancient *ordine retrogrado*, by a computation backwards from ourselves.

'Another error induced by the former, is a distrust that any thing should be now to be found out which the world should have missed and passed over so long time, as if the same objection were to be made to time that Lucian makes to Jupiter and other the Heathen Gods, of which he wondereth that they begot so many children in old age, and begot none in his time, and asketh whether they were become septuagenary, or whether the law *Papia* made against old men's marriages had restrained them. So it seemeth men doubt, lest time was become past children and generation: wherein contrary-wise, we see commonly the levity and unconstancy of men's judgments, which till a matter be done, wonder that it can be done, and as soon as it is done, wonder again that it was done no sooner, as we see in the expedition of Alexander into Asia, which at first was prejudged as a vast and impossible enterprise, and yet afterwards it pleaseth Livy to make no more of it than this, *nil aliud quam bene ausus vana contemnere.* And the same happened to Columbus in his western navigation. But in intellectual matters, it is much more common; as may be seen in most of the propositions in Euclid, which till they be demonstrate, they seem strange to our assent, but being demonstrate, our mind accepteth of them by a kind of relation (as the lawyers speak) as if we had known them before.

'Another is an impatience of doubt and haste to assertion without due and mature suspension of judgment. For the two ways of contemplation are not unlike the two ways of action, commonly spoken of by the Ancients. The one plain and smooth in the beginning, and in the end impassable: the other rough and troublesome in the entrance, but after a while fair and even; so it is in contemplation, if a man will begin with

certainties, he shall end in doubts; but if he will be content to begin with doubts, he shall end in certainties.

'Another error is in the manner of the tradition or delivery of knowledge, which is for the most part magistral and peremptory, and not ingenuous and faithful; in a sort, as may be soonest believed, and not easiliest examined. It is true, that in compendious treatises for practice, that form is not to be disallowed. But in the true handling of knowledge, men ought not to fall either on the one side into the vein of Velleius the Epicurean; *nil tam metuens quam ne dubitare aliqua de re videretur*: nor on the other side, into Socrates his ironical doubting of all things, but to propound things sincerely, with more or less asseveration; as they stand in a man's own judgment, proved more or less.'

Lord Bacon in this part declares, 'that it is not his purpose to enter into a laudative of learning or to make a Hymn to the Muses,' yet he has gone near to do this in the following observations on the dignity of knowledge. He says, after speaking of rulers and conquerors:

'But the commandment of knowledge is yet higher than the commandment over the will; for it is a commandment over the reason, belief, and understanding of man, which is the highest part of the mind, and giveth law to the will itself. For there is no power on earth which setteth a throne or chair of estate in the spirits and souls of men, and in their cogitations, imaginations, opinions, and beliefs, but knowledge and learning. And therefore we see the detestable and extreme pleasure that archheretics and false prophets and impostors are transported with, when they once find in themselves that they have a superiority in the faith and conscience of men: so great, as if they have once tasted of it, it is seldom seen that any torture or persecution can make them relinquish or abandon it. But as this is that which the author of the Revelations calls the depth or profoundness of Satan; so by argument of contraries, the just and lawful sovereignty over men's understanding, by force of truth rightly interpreted, is that which approacheth nearest to the similitude of the Divine Rule. . . . Let us conclude with the dignity and excellency of knowledge and learning in that whereunto man's nature doth most aspire, which is immortality or continuance: for to this tendeth generation, and raising of houses and families; to this tendeth buildings, foundations, and monuments; to this tendeth the desire of memory, fame, and celebration, and in effect, the strength of all other humane desires; we see then how far the monuments of wit and learning are more durable than the monuments of power or of the hands. For have not the verses of Homer continued twenty-five hundred years and more, without the loss of a syllable or letter; during which time infinite palaces, temples, castles, cities, have been decayed and demolished? It is not possible to have the true pictures or statues of Cyrus, Alexander, Cæsar, no, nor of the kings, or great personages of much later years. For the originals cannot last; and the copies cannot but lose of the life and truth. But the images of men's wits and knowledge remain in books, exempted from the wrong of

time, and capable of perpetual renovation. Neither are they fitly to be called images, because they generate still, and cast their seeds in the minds of others, provoking and causing infinite actions and opinions in succeeding ages. So that, if the invention of the ship was thought so noble, which carrieth riches and commodities from place to place, and consociateth the most remote regions in participation of their fruits, how much more are letters to be magnified, which as ships, pass through the vast seas of time, and make ages so distant to participate of the wisdom, illuminations, and inventions the one of the other?'

Passages of equal force and beauty might be quoted from almost every page of this work and of the Essays.

Sir Thomas Brown and Bishop Taylor were two prose-writers in the succeeding age, who, for pomp and copiousness of style, might be compared to Lord Bacon. In all other respects they were opposed to him and to one another.—As Bacon seemed to bend all his thoughts to the practice of life, and to bring home the light of science to 'the bosoms and businesses of men,' Sir Thomas Brown seemed to be of opinion that the only business of life, was to think, and that the proper object of speculation was, by darkening knowledge, to breed more speculation, and 'find no end in wandering mazes lost.' He chose the incomprehensible and impracticable as almost the only subjects fit for a lofty and lasting contemplation, or for the exercise of a solid faith. He cried out for an *oh altitudo* beyond the heights of revelation, and posed himself with apocryphal mysteries, as the pastime of his leisure hours. He pushes a question to the utmost verge of conjecture, that he may repose on the certainty of doubt; and he removes an object to the greatest distance from him, that he may take a high and abstracted interest in it, consider it in its relation to the sum of things, not to himself, and bewilder his understanding in the universality of its nature and the inscrutableness of its origin. His is the sublime of indifference; a passion for the abstruse and imaginary. He turns the world round for his amusement, as if it was a globe of paste-board. He looks down on sublunary affairs as if he had taken his station in one of the planets. The Antipodes are next-door neighbours to him, and Dooms-day is not far off. With a thought he embraces both the poles; the march of his pen is over the great divisions of geography and chronology. Nothing touches him nearer than humanity. He feels that he is mortal only in the decay of nature, and the dust of long forgotten tombs. The finite is lost in the infinite. The orbits of the heavenly bodies or the history of empires are to him but a point in time or a speck in the universe. The great Platonic year revolves in one of his periods. Nature is too little for the grasp of his style. He

scoops an antithesis out of fabulous antiquity, and rakes up an epithet from the sweepings of Chaos. It is as if his books had dropt from the clouds, or as if Friar Bacon's head could speak. He stands on the edge of the world of sense and reason, and gains a vertigo by looking down at impossibilities and chimeras. Or he busies himself with the mysteries of the Cabbala, or the enclosed secrets of the heavenly quincunxes, as children are amused with tales of the nursery. The passion of curiosity (the only passion of childhood) had in him survived to old age, and had superannuated his other faculties. He moralizes and grows pathetic on a mere idle fancy of his own, as if thought and being were the same, or as if 'all this world were one glorious lie.' For a thing to have ever had a name is sufficient warrant to entitle it to respectful belief, and to invest it with all the rights of a subject and its predicates. He is superstitious, but not bigotted: to him all religions are much the same, and he says that he should not like to have lived in the time of Christ and the Apostles, as it would have rendered his faith too gross and palpable. —His gossipping egotism and personal character have been preferred unjustly to Montaigne's. He had no personal character at all but the peculiarity of resolving all the other elements of his being into thought, and of trying experiments on his own nature in an exhausted receiver of idle and unsatisfactory speculations. All that he 'differences himself by,' to use his own expression, is this moral and physical indifference. In describing himself, he deals only in negatives. He says he has neither prejudices nor antipathies to manners, habits, climate, food, to persons or things; they were alike acceptable to him as they afforded new topics for reflection; and he even professes that he could never bring himself heartily to hate the Devil. He owns in one place of the *Religio Medici*, that 'he could be content if the species were continued like trees,' and yet he declares that this was from no aversion to love, or beauty, or harmony; and the reasons he assigns to prove the orthodoxy of his taste in this respect, is, that he was an admirer of the music of the spheres! He tells us that he often composed a comedy in his sleep. It would be curious to know the subject or the texture of the plot. It must have been something like Nabbes's Mask of Microcosmus, of which the *dramatis personæ* have been already given; or else a misnomer, like Dante's Divine Comedy of Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory. He was twice married, as if to shew his disregard even for his own theory; and he had a hand in the execution of some old women for witchcraft, I suppose, to keep a decorum in absurdity, and to indulge an agreeable horror at his own fantastical reveries on the occasion. In a word, his mind seemed

to converse chiefly with the intelligible forms, the spectral apparitions of things, he delighted in the preternatural and visionary, and he only existed at the circumference of his nature. He had the most intense consciousness of contradictions and non-entities, and he decks them out in the pride and pedantry of words as if they were the attire of his proper person: the categories hang about his neck like the gold chain of knighthood, and he 'walks gowned' in the intricate folds and swelling drapery of dark sayings and impenetrable riddles!

I will give one gorgeous passage to illustrate all this, from his Urn-Burial, or Hydriotaphia. He digs up the urns of some ancient Druids with the same ceremony and devotion as if they had contained the hallowed relics of his dearest friends; and certainly we feel (as it has been said) the freshness of the mould, and the breath of mortality, in the spirit and force of his style. The conclusion of this singular and unparalleled performance is as follows:

'What song the Syrens sang, or what name Achilles assumed when he hid himself among women, though puzzling questions, are not beyond all conjecture. What time the persons of these Ossuaries entered the famous nations of the dead, and slept with princes and counsellors, might admit a wide solution. But who were the proprietors of these bones, or what bodies these ashes made up, were a question above antiquarianism: not to be resolved by man, nor easily perhaps by spirits, except we consult the provincial guardians, or tutelary observators. Had they made as good provision for their names, as they have done for their reliques, they had not so grossly erred in the art of perpetuation. But to subsist in bones, and be but pyramidally extant, is a fallacy in duration. Vain ashes, which in the oblivion of names, persons, times, and sexes, have found unto themselves, a fruitless continuation, and only arise unto late posterity, as emblems of mortal vanities; antidotes against pride, vain glory, and madding vices. Pagan vain-glories, which thought the world might last for ever, had encouragement for ambition, and finding no Atropos unto the immortality of their names, were never dampt with the necessity of oblivion. Even old ambitions had the advantage of ours, in the attempts of their vain glories, who, acting early, and before the probable meridian of time, have, by this time, found great accomplishment of their designs, whereby the ancient heroes have already outlasted their monuments, and mechanical preservations. But in this latter scene of time we cannot expect such mummies unto our memories, when ambition may fear the prophecy of Elias, and Charles the Fifth can never hope to live within two Methuselah's of Hector.

'And therefore restless inquietude for the diuturnity of our memories unto present considerations, seems a vanity almost out of date, and super-annuated piece of folly. We cannot hope to live so long in our names as some have done in their persons: one face of Janus holds no proportion unto the other. 'Tis too late to be ambitious. The great mutations of the world are acted, or time may be too short for our designs. To extend

our memories by monuments, whose death we daily pray for, and whose duration we cannot hope, without injury to our expectations in the advent of the last day, were a contradiction to our beliefs. We whose generations are ordained in this setting part of time, are providentially taken off from such imaginations. And being necessitated to eye the remaining particle of futurity, are naturally constituted unto thoughts of the next world, and cannot excuseably decline the consideration of that duration, which maketh pyramids pillars of snow, and all that's past a moment.

'Circles and right lines limit and close all bodies, and the mortal right-lined circle, must conclude and shut up all. There is no antidote against the opium of time, which temporally considereth all things; our fathers find their graves in our short memories, and sadly tell us how we may be buried in our survivors. Grave-stones tell truth scarce forty years: generations pass while some trees stand, and old families last not three oaks. To be read by bare inscriptions like many in Gruter, to hope for eternity by enigmatical epithets, or first letters of our names, to be studied by antiquaries, who we were, and have new names given us like many of the mummies, are cold consolations unto the students of perpetuity, even by everlasting languages.

'To be content that times to come should only know there was such a man, not caring whether they knew more of him, was a frigid ambition in Cardan: disparaging his horoscopal inclination and judgment of himself, who cares to subsist like Hippocrates' patients, or Achilles' horses in Homer, under naked nominations without deserts and noble acts, which are the balsam of our memories, the Entelechia and soul of our subsistences. To be nameless in worthy deeds exceeds an infamous history. The Canaanitish woman lives more happily without a name, than Herodias with one. And who had not rather have been the good thief, than Pilate?

'But the iniquity of oblivion blindly scattereth her poppy, and deals with the memory of men without distinction to merit of perpetuity. Who can but pity the founder of the pyramids? Herostratus lives that burnt the temple of Diana, he is almost lost that built it; time hath spared the epitaph of Adrian's horse, confounded that of himself. In vain we compute our felicities by the advantage of our good names, since bad have equal durations: and Thersites is like to live as long as Agamemnon, without the favour of the everlasting register. Who knows whether the best of men be known? or whether there be not more remarkable persons forgot, than any that stand remembered in the known account of time? the first man had been as unknown as the last, and Methuselah's long life had been his only chronicle.

'Oblivion is not to be hired: the greater part must be content to be as though they had not been, to be found in the register of God, not in the record of man. Twenty-seven names make up the first story, and the recorded names ever since, contain not one living century. The number of the dead long exceedeth all that shall live. The night of time far surpasseth the day, and who knows when was the equinox? Every hour adds unto that current arithmetic, which scarce stands one moment. And since death must be the Lucina of life, and even Pagans could doubt

whether thus to live, were to die: since our longest sun sets at right descensions, and makes but winter arches, and therefore it cannot be long before we lie down in darkness, and have our light in ashes; since the brother of death daily haunts us with dying mementos, and time that grows old itself, bids us hope no long duration: diuturnity is a dream and folly of expectation.

'Darkness and light divide the course of time, and oblivion shares with memory, a great part even of our living beings; we slightly remember our felicities, and the smartest strokes of affliction leave but short smart upon us. Sense endureth no extremities, and sorrows destroy us or themselves. To weep into stones are fables. Afflictions induce callosities, miseries are slippery, or fall like snow upon us, which notwithstanding is no unhappy stupidity. To be ignorant of evils to come, and forgetful of evils past, is a merciful provision in nature, whereby we digest the mixture of our few and evil days, and our delivered senses not relapsing into cutting remembrances, our sorrows are not kept raw by the edge of repetitions. A great part of antiquity contented their hopes of subsistency with a transmigration of their souls. A good way to continue their memories, while having the advantage of plural successions, they could not but act something remarkable in such variety of beings, and enjoying the fame of their passed selves, make accumulation of glory unto their last durations. Others, rather than be lost in the uncomfortable night of nothing, were content to recede into the common being, and make one particle of the public soul of all things, which was no more than to return into their unknown and divine original again. Egyptian ingenuity was more unsatisfied, conserving their bodies in sweet consistences, to attend the return of their souls. But all was vanity, feeding the wind, and folly. The Egyptian mummies, which Cambyses or time hath spared, avarice now consumeth. Mummy is become merchandise, Mizraim cures wounds, and Pharaoh is sold for balsams.

'In vain do individuals hope for immortality, or any patent from oblivion, in preservations below the moon: Men have been deceived even in their flatteries above the sun, and studied conceits to perpetuate their names in heaven. The various cosmography of that part hath already varied the names of contrived constellations; Nimrod is lost in Orion, and Osyris in the Dog-star. While we look for incorruption in the heavens, we find they are but like the earth; durable in their main bodies, alterable in their parts: whereof beside comets and new stars, perspectives begin to tell tales. And the spots that wander about the sun, with Phaeton's favour, would make clear conviction.

'There is nothing immortal, but immortality; whatever hath no beginning may be confident of no end. All others have a dependent being, and within the reach of destruction, which is the peculiar of that necessary essence that cannot destroy itself; and the highest strain of omnipotency to be so powerfully constituted, as not to suffer even from the power of itself. But the sufficiency of Christian immortality frustrates all earthly glory, and the quality of either state after death, makes a folly of posthumous memory. God who can only destroy our souls, and hath assured our resurrection, either of our bodies or names hath directly promised no duration. Wherein there is so much of chance, that the

boldest expectants have found unhappy frustration; and to hold long subsistence, seems but a scape in oblivion. But man is a noble animal, splendid in ashes, and pompous in the grave, solemnizing Nativities and Deaths with equal lustre, nor omitting ceremonies of bravery, in the infamy of his nature.

'Life is a pure flame, and we live by an invisible sun within us. A small fire sufficeth for life, great flames seemed too little after death, while men vainly affected precious pyres, and to burn like Sardanapalus; but the wisdom of funeral laws found the folly of prodigal blazes, and reduced undoing fires unto the rule of sober obsequies, wherein few could be so mean as not to provide wood, pitch, a mourner, and an urn.

'Five languages secured not the epitaph of Gordianus; the man of God lives longer without a tomb than any by one, invisibly interred by Angels, and adjudged to obscurity, though not without some marks directing humane discovery. Enoch and Elias without either tomb or burial, in an anomalous state of being, are the great examples of perpetuity, in their long and living memory, in strict account being still on this side death, and having a late part yet to act on this stage of earth. If in the decretory term of the world we shall not all die but be changed, according to received translation; the last day will make but few graves; at least quick resurrections will anticipate lasting sepultures; some graves will be opened before they be quite closed, and Lazarus be no wonder. When many that feared to die shall groan that they can die but once, the dismal state is the second and living death, when life puts despair on the damned; when men shall wish the covering of mountains, not of monuments, and annihilation shall be courted.

'While some have studied monuments, others have studiously declined them: and some have been so vainly boisterous, that they durst not acknowledge their graves; wherein Alaricus seems most subtle, who had a river turned to hide his bones at the bottom. Even Sylla that thought himself safe in his urn, could not prevent revenging tongues, and stones thrown at his monument. Happy are they whom privacy makes innocent, who deal so with men in this world, that they are not afraid to meet them in the next, who when they die, make no commotion among the dead, and are not touched with that poetical taunt of Isaiah.

'Pyramids, arches, obelisks, were but the irregularities of vain-glory, and wild enormities of ancient magnanimity. But the most magnanimous resolution rests in the Christian religion, which trampleth upon pride, and sits on the neck of ambition, humbly pursuing that infallible perpetuity, unto which all others must diminish their diameters, and be poorly seen in angles of contingency.

'Pious spirits who passed their days in raptures of futurity, made little more of this world, than the world that was before it, while they lay obscure in the chaos of pre-ordination, and night of their fore-beings. And if any have been so happy as truly to understand Christian annihilation, extasies, exolution, liquefaction, transformation, the kiss of the spouse, gustation of God, and ingression into the divine shadow, they have already had an handsome anticipation of heaven; the glory of the world is surely over, and the earth in ashes unto them.

CHARACTER OF SIR T. BROWN AS A WRITER

'To subsist in lasting monuments, to live in their productions, to exist in their names, and prædicament of Chimeras, was large satisfaction unto old expectations, and made one part of their Elysiums. But all this is nothing in the metaphysicks of true belief. To live indeed is to be again ourselves, which being not only an hope but an evidence in noble believers: 'tis all one to lie in St. Innocent's church-yard, as in the sands of Egypt: ready to be any thing, in the extasy of being ever, and as content with six foot as the moles of Adrianus.'

I subjoin the following account of this extraordinary writer's style, said to be written in a blank leaf of his works by Mr. Coleridge.

'Sir Thomas Brown is among my first favourites. Rich in various knowledge, exuberant in conceptions and conceits; contemplative, imaginative, often truly great and magnificent in his style and diction, though, doubtless, too often big, stiff, and *hyperlatinistic*: thus I might, without admixture of falshood, describe Sir T. Brown; and my description would have this fault only, that it would be equally, or almost equally, applicable to half a dozen other writers, from the beginning of the reign of Elizabeth to the end of the reign of Charles the Second. He is indeed all this; and what he has more than all this, and peculiar to himself, I seem to convey to my own mind in some measure, by saying, that he is a quiet and sublime *enthusiast*, with a strong tinge of the *fantast*; the humourist constantly mingling with, and flashing across the philosopher, as the darting colours in shot silk play upon the main dye. In short, he has brains in his head, which is all the more interesting for a little twist in the brains. He sometimes reminds the reader of Montaigne; but from no other than the general circumstance of an egotism common to both, which, in Montaigne, is too often a mere amusing gossip, a chit-chat story of whims and peculiarities that lead to nothing; but which, in Sir Thomas Brown, is always the result of a feeling heart, conjoined with a mind of active curiosity, the natural and becoming egotism of a man, who, loving other men as himself, gains the habit and the privilege of talking about himself as familiarly as about other men. Fond of the curious, and a hunter of oddities and strangenesses, while he conceives himself with quaint and humorous gravity, an useful inquirer into physical truths and fundamental science, he loved to contemplate and discuss his own thoughts and feelings, because he found by comparison with other men's, that *they*, too, were curiosities; and so, with a perfectly graceful interesting ease, he put *them*, too, into his museum and cabinet of rarities. In very truth, he was not mistaken, so completely does he see every thing in a light of his own; reading nature neither by sun, moon, or candle-light, but by the light of the fairy glory around his own head;

that you might say, that nature had granted to *him* in perpetuity, a patent and monopoly for all his thoughts. Read his *Hydriotaphia* above all, and, in addition to the peculiarity, the exclusive *Sir Thomas Browne-ness*, of all the fancies and modes of illustration, wonder at, and admire, his *entireness* in every subject which is before him. He is *totus in illo*, he follows it, he never wanders from it, and he has no occasion to wander; for whatever happens to be his subject, he metamorphoses all nature into it. In that Hydriotaphia, or treatise on some urns dug up in Norfolk—how *earthy*, how redolent of graves and sepulchres is every line! You have now dark mould; now a thigh-bone; now a skull; then a bit of a mouldered coffin; a fragment of an old tombstone, with moss in its *hic jacet*; a ghost, a winding sheet; or the echo of a funeral psalm wafted on a November wind: and the gayest thing you shall meet with, shall be a silver nail, or gilt *anno domini*, from a perished coffin top!—The very same remark applies in the same force, to the interesting, though far less interesting treatise on the Quincuncial Plantations of the Ancients, the same *entireness* of subject! Quincunxes in heaven above; quincunxes in earth below; quincunxes in deity; quincunxes in the mind of man; quincunxes in tones, in optic nerves, in roots of trees, in leaves, in every thing! In short, just turn to the last leaf of this volume, and read out aloud to yourself the seven last paragraphs of chapter 5th, beginning with the words "*More considerable.*" But it is time for me to be in bed. In the words of Sir T. Brown (which will serve as a fine specimen of his manner), "But the quincunxes of Heaven (*the hyades, or five stars about the horizon, at midnight at that time*) run low, and it is time we close the five parts of knowledge; we are unwilling to spin out our waking thoughts into the phantoms of sleep, which often continue precogitations, making cables of cobwebs, and wildernesses of handsome groves. To keep our eyes open longer, were to *act* our antipodes! The huntsmen are up in Arabia; and they have already passed their first sleep in Persia." Think you, that there ever was such a reason given before for going to bed at midnight; to wit, that if we did not, we should be *acting* the part of our antipodes! And then, "THE HUNTSMEN ARE UP IN ARABIA,"—what life, what fancy! Does the whimsical knight give us thus, the *essence* of gunpowder tea, and call it an *opiate*?'[1]

[1] Sir Thomas Brown has it, 'The huntsmen are up in America,' but Mr. Coleridge prefers reading Arabia. I do not think his account of the Urn-Burial very happy. Sir Thomas can be said to be 'wholly in his subject,' only because he is *wholly out of it*. There is not a word in the Hydriotaphia about 'a thigh-bone, or a skull, or a bit of mouldered coffin, or a tomb-stone, or a ghost, or a winding-

CHARACTER OF JEREMY TAYLOR

Jeremy Taylor was a writer as different from Sir Thomas Brown as it was possible for one writer to be from another. He was a dignitary of the church, and except in matters of casuistry and controverted points, could not be supposed to enter upon speculative doubts, or give a loose to a sort of dogmatical scepticism. He had less thought, less 'stuff of the conscience,' less 'to give us pause,' in his impetuous oratory, but he had equal fancy—not the same vastness and profundity, but more richness and beauty, more warmth and tenderness. He is as rapid, as flowing, and endless, as the other is stately, abrupt, and concentrated. The eloquence of the one is like a river, that of the other is more like an aqueduct. The one is as sanguine, as the other is saturnine in the temper of his mind. Jeremy Taylor took obvious and admitted truths for granted, and illustrated them with an inexhaustible display of new and enchanting imagery. Sir Thomas Brown talks in sum-totals: Jeremy Taylor enumerates all the particulars of a subject. He gives every aspect it will bear, and never 'cloys with sameness.' His characteristic is enthusiastic and delightful amplification. Sir Thomas Brown gives the beginning and end of things, that you may judge of their place and magnitude: Jeremy Taylor describes their qualities and texture, and enters into all the items of the debtor and creditor account between life and death, grace and nature, faith and good works. He puts his heart into his fancy. He does not pretend to annihilate the passions and pursuits of mankind in the pride of philosophic indifference, but treats them as serious and momentous things, warring with conscience and the soul's health, or furnishing the means of grace and hopes of glory. In his writings, the frail stalk of human life reclines on the bosom of eternity. His Holy Living and Dying is a divine pastoral. He writes to the faithful followers of Christ, as the shepherd pipes to his flock. He introduces touching and heartfelt appeals to familiar life; condescends to men of low estate; and his pious page blushes with modesty and beauty. His style is prismatic. It unfolds the colours of the rainbow; it floats like the bubble through the air; it is like

sheet, or an echo,' nor is 'a silver nail or a gilt *anno domini* the gayest thing you shall meet with.' You do not meet with them at all in the text; nor is it possible, either from the nature of the subject, or of Sir T. Brown's mind, that you should! He chose the subject of Urn-Burial, because it was 'one of no mark or likelihood,' totally free from the romantic prettinesses and pleasing poetical common-places with which Mr. Coleridge has adorned it, and because, being 'without form and void,' it gave unlimited scope to his high-raised and shadowy imagination. The motto of this author's compositions might be—'*De apparentibus et non existentibus eadem est ratio.*' He created his own materials: or to speak of him in his own language, 'he saw nature in the elements of its chaos, and discerned his favourite notions in the great obscurity of nothing!'

innumerable dew-drops that glitter on the face of morning, and tremble as they glitter. He does not dig his way underground, but slides upon ice, borne on the winged car of fancy. The dancing light he throws upon objects is like an Aurora Borealis, playing betwixt heaven and earth—

> 'Where pure Niemi's faery banks arise,
> And fringed with roses Tenglio rolls its stream.'

His exhortations to piety and virtue are a gay *memento mori.* He mixes up death's-heads and amaranthine flowers; makes life a procession to the grave, but crowns it with gaudy garlands, and 'rains sacrificial roses' on its path. In a word, his writings are more like fine poetry than any other prose whatever; they are a choral song in praise of virtue, and a hymn to the Spirit of the Universe. I shall give a few passages, to shew how feeble and inefficient this praise is.

The Holy Dying begins in this manner:

'A man is a bubble. He is born in vanity and sin; he comes into the world like morning mushrooms, soon thrusting up their heads into the air, and conversing with their kindred of the same production, and as soon they turn into dust and forgetfulness; some of them without any other interest in the affairs of the world, but that they made their parents a little glad, and very sorrowful. Others ride longer in the storm; it may be until seven years of vanity be expired, and then peradventure the sun shines hot upon their heads, and they fall into the shades below, into the cover of death and darkness of the grave to hide them. But if the bubble stands the shock of a bigger drop, and outlives the chances of a child, of a careless nurse, of drowning in a pail of water, of being over-laid by a sleepy servant, or such little accidents, then the young man dances like a bubble empty and gay, and shines like a dove's neck, or the image of a rainbow, which hath no substance, and whose very imagery and colours are phantastical; and so he dances out the gaiety of his youth, and is all the while in a storm, and endures, only because he is not knocked on the head by a drop of bigger rain, or crushed by the pressure of a load of indigested meat, or quenched by the disorder of an ill-placed humour; and to preserve a man alive in the midst of so many chances and hostilities, is as great a miracle as to create him; to preserve him from rushing into nothing, and at first to draw him up from nothing, were equally the issues of an Almighty power.'

Another instance of the same rich continuity of feeling and transparent brilliancy in working out an idea, is to be found in his description of the dawn and progress of reason.

'Some are called *at age* at fourteen, some at one and twenty, some never; but all men late enough; for the life of a man comes upon him slowly and insensibly. But as when the sun approaches towards the gates of the morning, he first opens a little eye of heaven, and sends away the spirits of

darkness, and gives light to a cock, and calls up the lark to mattins, and by and by gilds the fringes of a cloud, and peeps over the eastern hills, thrusting out his golden horns, like those which decked the brows of Moses, when he was forced to wear a veil, because himself had seen the face of God; and still, while a man tells the story, the sun gets up higher, till he shews a fair face and a full light, and then he shines one whole day, under a cloud often, and sometimes weeping great and little showers, and sets quickly: so is a man's reason and his life.'

This passage puts one in mind of the rising dawn and kindling skies in one of Claude's landscapes. Sir Thomas Brown has nothing of this rich finishing and exact gradation. The genius of the two men differed, as that of the painter from the mathematician. The one measures objects, the other copies them. The one shews that things are nothing out of themselves, or in relation to the whole: the one, what they are in themselves, and in relation to us. Or the one may be said to apply the telescope of the mind to distant bodies; the other looks at nature in its infinite minuteness and glossy splendour through a solar microscope.

In speaking of Death, our author's style assumes the port and withering smile of the King of Terrors. The following are scattered passages on this subject.

'It is the same harmless thing that a poor shepherd suffered yesterday or a maid servant to-day; and at the same time in which you die, in that very night a thousand creatures die with you, some wise men, and many fools; and the wisdom of the first will not quit him, and the folly of the latter does not make him unable to die.' . . . . . .

'I have read of a fair young German gentleman, who, while living, often refused to be pictured, but put off the importunity of his friends' desire by giving way that after a few days' burial, they might send a painter to his vault, and if they saw cause for it, draw the image of his death *unto the life*. They did so, and found his face half-eaten, and his midriff and back-bone full of serpents; and so he stands pictured among his armed ancestors.' . . .

'It is a mighty change that is made by the death of every person, and it is visible to us, who are alive. Reckon but from the sprightfulness of youth and the fair cheeks and full eyes of childhood, from the vigorousness and strong flexure of the joints of five and twenty, to the hollowness and dead paleness, to the loathsomeness and horror of a three days' burial, and we shall perceive the distance to be very great and very strange. But so have I seen a rose newly springing from the clefts of its hood, and at first it was fair as the morning, and full with the dew of heaven, as the lamb's fleece; but when a ruder breath had forced open its virgin modesty, and dismantled its too youthful and unripe retirements, it began to put on darkness and to decline to softness and the symptoms of a sickly age, it bowed the head and broke its stalk, and at night, having lost some of its leaves, and all its beauty, it fell into the portion of weeds and outworn faces. So does the

fairest beauty change, and it will be as bad with you and me; and then what servants shall we have to wait upon us in the grave? What friends to visit us? What officious people to cleanse away the moist and unwholesome cloud reflected upon our faces from the sides of the weeping vaults, which are the longest weepers for our funerals?'

'A man may read a sermon, the best and most passionate that ever man preached, if he shall but enter into the sepulchres of kings. In the same Escurial where the Spanish princes live in greatness and power, and decree war or peace, they have wisely placed a cemetery where their ashes and their glory shall sleep till time shall be no more: and where our kings have been crowned, their ancestors lie interred, and they must walk over their grandsires' head to take his crown. There is an acre sown with royal seed, the copy of the greatest change from rich to naked, from ceiled roofs to arched coffins, from living like Gods to die like men. There is enough to cool the flames of lust, to abate the heights of pride, to appease the itch of covetous desires, to sully and dash out the dissembling colours of a lustful, artificial, and imaginary beauty. There the warlike and the peaceful, the fortunate and the miserable, the beloved and the despised princes mingle their dust, and pay down their symbol of mortality, and tell all the world that when we die, our ashes shall be equal to kings, and our accounts easier, and our pains for our crimes shall be less.[1] To my apprehension, it is a sad record which is left by Athenæus concerning Ninus the great Assyrian monarch, whose life and death is summed up in these words: "Ninus the Assyrian had an ocean of gold, and other riches more than the sand in the Caspian sea; he never saw the stars, and perhaps he never desired it; he never stirred up the holy fire among the Magi; nor touched his God with the sacred rod according to the laws: he never offered sacrifice, nor worshipped the deity, nor

[1] The above passage is an inimitably fine paraphrase of some lines on the tombs in Westminster Abbey by F. Beaumont. It shows how near Jeremy Taylor's style was to poetry, and how well it weaves in with it.

'Mortality, behold, and fear,
What a charge of flesh is here!
Think how many royal bones
Sleep within this heap of stones:
Here they lie, had realms and lands,
Who now want strength to stir their hands.
Where from their pulpits seal'd in dust,
They preach "In greatness is no trust."
Here's an acre sown indeed
With the richest, royal'st seed
That the earth did e'er suck in,
Since the first man died for sin.
Here the bones of birth have cried,
Though Gods they were, as men they died.
Here are sands, ignoble things,
Dropp'd from the ruin'd sides of kings.
Here's a world of pomp and state
Buried in dust, once dead by fate.'

administered justice, nor spake to the people; nor numbered them: but he was most valiant to eat and drink, and having mingled his wines, he threw the rest upon the stones. This man is dead: behold his sepulchre, and now hear where Ninus is. Sometime I was Ninus, and drew the breath of a living man, but now am nothing but clay. I have nothing but what I did eat, and what I served to myself in lust is all my portion: the wealth with which I was blessed, my enemies meeting together shall carry away, as the mad Thyades carry a raw goat. I am gone to hell: and when I went thither, I neither carried gold nor horse, nor silver chariot. I that wore a mitre, am now a little heap of dust."'

He who wrote in this manner also wore a mitre, and is now a heap of dust; but when the name of Jeremy Taylor is no longer remembered with reverence, genius will have become a mockery, and virtue an empty shade!

LECTURE VIII

ON THE SPIRIT OF ANCIENT AND MODERN LITERATURE—ON THE GERMAN DRAMA, CONTRASTED WITH THAT OF THE AGE OF ELIZABETH

Before I proceed to the more immediate subject of the present Lecture, I wish to say a few words of one or two writers in our own time, who have imbibed the spirit and imitated the language of our elder dramatists. Among these I may reckon the ingenious author of the Apostate and Evadne, who in the last-mentioned play, in particular, has availed himself with much judgment and spirit of the tragedy of the Traitor by old Shirley. It would be curious to hear the opinion of a professed admirer of the Ancients, and captious despiser of the Moderns, with respect to this production, before he knew it was a copy of an old play. Shirley himself lived in the time of Charles I. and died in the beginning of Charles II.[1]; but he had formed his style on that of the preceding age, and had written the greatest number of his plays in conjunction with Jonson, Deckar, and Massinger. He was 'the last of those fair clouds that on the bosom of bright honour sailed in long procession, calm and beautiful.' The name of Mr. Tobin is familiar to every lover of the drama. His Honey-Moon is evidently founded on The Taming of a Shrew, and Duke Aranza has been pronounced by a polite critic to be 'an elegant Petruchio.' The plot is taken from Shakespear; but the language and sentiments, both of this play and of the Curfew, bear a more direct resemblance to

[1] He and his wife both died from fright, occasioned by the great fire of London in 1665, and lie buried in St. Giles's church-yard.

the flowery tenderness of Beaumont and Fletcher, who were, I believe, the favourite study of our author. Mr. Lamb's John Woodvil may be considered as a dramatic fragment, intended for the closet rather than the stage. It would sound oddly in the lobbies of either theatre, amidst the noise and glare and bustle of resort; but 'there where we have treasured up our hearts,' in silence and in solitude, it may claim and find a place for itself. It might be read with advantage in the still retreats of Sherwood Forest, where it would throw a new-born light on the green, sunny glades; the tenderest flower might seem to drink of the poet's spirit, and 'the tall deer that paints a dancing shadow of his horns in the swift brook,' might seem to do so in mockery of the poet's thought. Mr. Lamb, with a modesty often attendant on fine feeling, has loitered too long in the humbler avenues leading to the temple of ancient genius, instead of marching boldly up to the sanctuary, as many with half his pretensions would have done: 'but fools rush in, where angels fear to tread.' The defective or objectionable parts of this production are imitations of the defects of the old writers: its beauties are his own, though in their manner. The touches of thought and passion are often as pure and delicate as they are profound; and the character of his heroine Margaret is perhaps the finest and most genuine female character out of Shakespear. This tragedy was not critic-proof: it had its cracks and flaws and breaches, through which the enemy marched in triumphant. The station which he had chosen was not indeed a walled town, but a straggling village, which the experienced engineers proceeded to lay waste; and he is pinned down in more than one Review of the day, as an exemplary warning to indiscreet writers, who venture beyond the pale of periodical taste and conventional criticism. Mr. Lamb was thus hindered by the taste of the polite vulgar from writing as he wished; his own taste would not allow him to write like them: and he (perhaps wisely) turned critic and prose-writer in his own defence. To say that he has written better about Shakespear, and about Hogarth, than any body else, is saying little in his praise.—A gentleman of the name of Cornwall, who has lately published a volume of Dramatic Scenes, has met with a very different reception, but I cannot say that he has *deserved* it. He has made no sacrifice at the shrine of fashionable affectation or false glitter. There is nothing common-place in his style to soothe the complacency of dulness, nothing extravagant to startle the grossness of ignorance. He writes with simplicity, delicacy, and fervour; continues a scene from Shakespear, or works out a hint from Boccacio in the spirit of his originals, and though he bows with reverence at the altar of those great masters, he keeps an eye curiously

intent on nature, and a mind awake to the admonitions of his own heart. As he has begun, so let him proceed. Any one who will turn to the glowing and richly-coloured conclusion of the Falcon, will, I think, agree with me in this wish!

There are four sorts or schools of tragedy with which I am acquainted. The first is the antique or classical. This consisted, I apprehend, in the introduction of persons on the stage, speaking, feeling, and acting *according to nature*, that is, according to the impression of given circumstances on the passions and mind of man in those circumstances, but limited by the physical conditions of time and place, as to its external form, and to a certain dignity of attitude and expression, selection in the figures, and unity in their grouping, as in a statue or bas-relief. The second is the Gothic or romantic, or as it might be called, the historical or poetical tragedy, and differs from the former, only in having a larger scope in the design and boldness in the execution; that is, it is the dramatic representation of nature and passion emancipated from the precise imitation of an actual event in place and time, from the same fastidiousness in the choice of the materials, and with the license of the epic and fanciful form added to it in the range of the subject and the decorations of language. This is particularly the style or school of Shakespear and of the best writers of the age of Elizabeth, and the one immediately following. Of this class, or genus, the *tragedie bourgeoise* is a variety, and the antithesis of the classical form. The third sort is the French or common-place rhetorical style, which is founded on the antique as to its form and subject-matter; but instead of individual nature, real passion, or imagination growing out of real passion and the circumstances of the speaker, it deals only in vague, imposing, and laboured declamations, or descriptions of nature, dissertations on the passions, and pompous flourishes which never entered any head but the author's, have no existence in nature which they pretend to identify, and are not dramatic at all, but purely didactic. The fourth and last is the German or paradoxical style, which differs from the others in representing men as acting not from the impulse of feeling, or as debating common-place questions of morality, but as the organs and mouth-pieces (that is, as acting, speaking, and thinking, under the sole influence) of certain extravagant speculative opinions, abstracted from all existing customs, prejudices and institutions.---It is my present business to speak chiefly of the first and last of these.

Sophocles differs from Shakespear as a Doric portico does from Westminster Abbey. The principle of the one is simplicity and harmony, of the other richness and power. The one relies on form or proportion, the other on quantity and variety and prominence of

parts. The one owes its charm to a certain union and regularity of feeling, the other adds to its effects from complexity and the combination of the greatest extremes. The classical appeals to sense and habit: the Gothic or romantic strikes from novelty, strangeness and contrast. Both are founded in essential and indestructible principles of human nature. We may prefer the one to the other, as we chuse, but to set up an arbitrary and bigotted standard of excellence in consequence of this preference, and to exclude either one or the other from poetry or art, is to deny the existence of the first principles of the human mind, and to war with nature, which is the height of weakness and arrogance at once.—There are some observations on this subject in a late number of the Edinburgh Review, from which I shall here make a pretty long extract.

'The most obvious distinction between the two styles, the classical and the romantic, is, that the one is conversant with objects that are grand or beautiful in themselves, or in consequence of obvious and universal associations; the other, with those that are interesting only by the force of circumstances and imagination. A Grecian temple, for instance, is a classical object: it is beautiful in itself, and excites immediate admiration. But the ruins of a Gothic castle have no beauty or symmetry to attract the eye; and yet they excite a more powerful and romantic interest, from the ideas with which they are habitually associated. If, in addition to this, we are told, that this is Macbeth's castle, the scene of the murder of Duncan, the interest will be instantly heightened to a sort of pleasing horror. The classical idea or form of any thing, it may also be observed, remains always the same, and suggests nearly the same impressions; but the associations of ideas belonging to the romantic character may vary infinitely, and take in the whole range of nature and accident. Antigone, in Sophocles, waiting near the grove of the Furies—Electra, in Æschylus, offering sacrifice at the tomb of Agamemnon—are classical subjects, because the circumstances and the characters have a correspondent dignity, and an immediate interest, from their mere designation. Florimel, in Spenser, where she is described sitting on the ground in the Witch's hut, is not classical, though in the highest degree poetical and romantic: for the incidents and situation are in themselves mean and disagreeable, till they are redeemed by the genius of the poet, and converted, by the very contrast, into a source of the utmost pathos and elevation of sentiment. Othello's handkerchief is not classical, though "there was magic in the web:"—it is only a powerful instrument of passion and imagination. Even Lear is not classical; for he is a poor crazy old man, who has nothing sublime about him but his afflictions, and who dies of a broken heart

'Schlegel somewhere compares the Furies of Æschylus to the Witches of Shakespear—we think without much reason. Perhaps Shakespear has surrounded the Weird Sisters with associations as terrible, and even more mysterious, strange, and fantastic, than the Furies of Æschylus; but the traditionary beings themselves are not so petrific. These are of marble,—their look alone must blast the beholder;—those are of air, bubbles; and though "so withered and so wild in their attire," it is their spells alone which are fatal. They owe their power to metaphysical aid: but the others contain all that is dreadful in their corporal figures. In this we see the distinct spirit of the classical and the romantic mythology. The serpents that twine round the head of the Furies are not to be trifled with, though they implied no preternatural power. The bearded Witches in Macbeth are in themselves grotesque and ludicrous, except as this strange deviation from nature staggers our imagination, and leads us to expect and to believe in all incredible things. They appal the faculties by what they say or do;—the others are intolerable, even to sight.

'Our author is right in affirming, that the true way to understand the plays of Sophocles and Æschylus, is to study them before the groupes of the Niobe or the Laocoon. If we can succeed in explaining this analogy, we shall have solved nearly the whole difficulty. For it is certain, that there are exactly the same powers of mind displayed in the poetry of the Greeks as in their statues. Their poetry is exactly what their sculptors might have written. Both are exquisite imitations of nature; the one in marble, the other in words. It is evident, that the Greek poets had the same perfect idea of the subjects they described, as the Greek sculptors had of the objects they represented; and they give as much of this absolute truth of imitation, as can be given by words. But in this direct and simple imitation of nature, as in describing the form of a beautiful woman, the poet is greatly inferior to the sculptor: it is in the power of illustration, in comparing it to other things, and suggesting other ideas of beauty or love, that he has an entirely new source of imagination opened to him: and of this power, the moderns have made at least a bolder and more frequent use than the ancients. The description of Helen in Homer is a description of what might have happened and been seen, as "that she moved with grace, and that the old men rose up with reverence as she passed;" the description of Belphœbe in Spenser is a description of what was only visible to the eye of the poet.

"Upon her eyelids many graces sat,
Under the shadow of her even brows."

The description of the soldiers going to battle in Shakespear, "all plumed like estriches, like eagles newly baited, wanton as goats, wild as young bulls," is too bold, figurative, and profuse of dazzling images, for the mild, equable tone of classical poetry, which never loses sight of the object in the illustration. The ideas of the ancients were too exact and definite, too much attached to the material form or vehicle by which they were conveyed, to admit of those rapid combinations, those unrestrained flights of fancy, which, glancing from heaven to earth, unite the most opposite extremes, and draw the happiest illustrations from things the most remote. The two principles of imitation and imagination, indeed, are not only distinct, but almost opposite.

'The great difference, then, which we find between the classical and the romantic style, between ancient and modern poetry, is, that the one more frequently describes things as they are interesting in themselves,—the other for the sake of the associations of ideas connected with them; that the one dwells more on the immediate impressions of objects on the senses—the other on the ideas which they suggest to the imagination. The one is the poetry of form, the other of effect. The one gives only what is necessarily implied in the subject, the other all that can possibly arise out of it. The one seeks to identify the imitation with the external object,—clings to it,—is inseparable from it,—is either that or nothing; the other seeks to identify the original impression with whatever else, within the range of thought or feeling, can strengthen, relieve, adorn or elevate it. Hence the severity and simplicity of the Greek tragedy, which excluded every thing foreign or unnecessary to the subject. Hence the Unities: for, in order to identify the imitation as much as possible with the reality, and leave nothing to mere imagination, it was necessary to give the same coherence and consistency to the different parts of a story, as to the different limbs of a statue. Hence the beauty and grandeur of their materials; for, deriving their power over the mind from the truth of the imitation, it was necessary that the subject which they made choice of, and from which they could not depart, should be in itself grand and beautiful. Hence the perfection of their execution; which consisted in giving the utmost harmony, delicacy, and refinement to the details of a given subject. Now, the characteristic excellence of the moderns is the reverse of all this. As, according to our author, the poetry of the Greeks is the same as their sculpture; so, he says, our own more nearly resembles painting,—where the artist can relieve and throw back his figures at pleasure,—use a greater variety of contrasts,—and where light and shade, like the colours of fancy, are reflected on the different objects. The Muse of classical poetry should be represented as a beautiful naked

figure: the Muse of modern poetry should be represented clothed, and with wings. The first has the advantage in point of form; the last in colour and motion.

'Perhaps we may trace this difference to something analogous in physical organization, situation, religion, and manners. First, the physical organization of the Greeks seems to have been more perfect, more susceptible of external impressions, and more in harmony with external nature than ours, who have not the same advantages of climate and constitution. Born of a beautiful and vigorous race, with quick senses and a clear understanding, and placed under a mild heaven, they gave the fullest developement to their external faculties: and where all is perceived easily, every thing is perceived in harmony and proportion. It is the stern genius of the North which drives men back upon their own resources, which makes them slow to perceive, and averse to feel, and which, by rendering them insensible to the single, successive impressions of things, requires their collective and combined force to rouse the imagination violently and unequally. It should be remarked, however, that the early poetry of some of the Eastern nations has even more of that irregularity, wild enthusiasm, and disproportioned grandeur, which has been considered as the distinguishing character of the Northern nations.

'Again, a good deal may be attributed to the state of manners and political institutions. The ancient Greeks were warlike tribes encamped in cities. They had no other country than that which was enclosed within the walls of the town in which they lived. Each individual belonged, in the first instance, to the state; and his relations to it were so close, as to take away, in a great measure, all personal independence and free-will. Every one was mortised to his place in society, and had his station assigned him as part of the political machine, which could only subsist by strict subordination and regularity. Every man was, as it were, perpetually on duty, and his faculties kept constant watch and ward. Energy of purpose and intensity of observation became the necessary characteristics of such a state of society; and the general principle communicated itself from this ruling concern for the public, to morals, to art, to language, to every thing.—The tragic poets of Greece were among her best soldiers; and it is no wonder that they were as severe in their poetry as in their discipline. Their swords and their styles carved out their way with equal sharpness.—After all, however, the tragedies of Sophocles, which are the perfection of the classical style, are hardly tragedies in our sense of the word.[1] They do not exhibit the extremity of human passion and suffering. The object of modern

[1] The difference in the tone of moral sentiment is the greatest of all others.

tragedy is to represent the soul utterly subdued as it were, or at least convulsed and overthrown by passion or misfortune. That of the ancients was to shew how the greatest crimes could be perpetrated with the least remorse, and the greatest calamities borne with the least emotion. Firmness of purpose and calmness of sentiment are their leading characteristics. Their heroes and heroines act and suffer as if they were always in the presence of a higher power, or as if human life itself were a religious ceremony, performed in honour of the Gods and of the State. The mind is not shaken to its centre; the whole being is not crushed or broken down. Contradictory motives are not accumulated; the utmost force of imagination and passion is not exhausted to overcome the repugnance of the will to crime; the contrast and combination of outward accidents are not called in to overwhelm the mind with the whole weight of unexpected calamity. The dire conflict of the feelings, the desperate struggle with fortune, are seldom there. All is conducted with a fatal composure; prepared and submitted to with inflexible constancy, as if Nature were only an instrument in the hands of Fate.

'This state of things was afterwards continued under the Roman empire. In the ages of chivalry and romance, which, after a considerable interval, succeeded its dissolution, and which have stamped their character on modern genius and literature, all was reversed. Society was again resolved into its component parts; and the world was, in a manner, to begin anew. The ties which bound the citizen and the soldier to the state being loosened, each person was thrown back into the circle of the domestic affections, or left to pursue his doubtful way to fame and fortune alone. This interval of time might be accordingly supposed to give birth to all that was constant in attachment, adventurous in action, strange, wild, and extravagant in invention. Human life took the shape of a busy, voluptuous dream, where the imagination was now lost amidst "antres vast and deserts idle;" or suddenly transported to stately palaces, echoing with dance and song. In this uncertainty of events, this fluctuation of hopes and fears, all objects became dim, confused, and vague. Magicians, dwarfs, giants, followed in the train of romance; and Orlando's enchanted sword, the horn which he carried with him, and which he blew thrice at Roncesvalles, and Rogero's winged horse, were not sufficient to protect them in their unheard-of encounters, or deliver them from their inextricable difficulties. It was a return to the period of the early heroic ages; but tempered by the difference of domestic manners, and the spirit of religion. The marked difference in the relation of the sexes arose from the freedom of choice in women; which, from being the slaves of the will and passions of

men, converted them into the arbiters of their fate, which introduced the modern system of gallantry, and first made love a feeling of the heart, founded on mutual affection and esteem. The leading virtues of the Christian religion, self-denial and generosity, assisted in producing the same effect.—Hence the spirit of chivalry, of romantic love, and honour!

'The mythology of the romantic poetry differed from the received religion: both differed essentially from the classical. The religion or mythology of the Greeks was nearly allied to their poetry: it was material and definite. The Pagan system reduced the Gods to the human form, and elevated the powers of inanimate nature to the same standard. Statues carved out of the finest marble, represented the objects of their religious worship in airy porticos, in solemn temples, and consecrated groves. Mercury was seen "new-lighted on some heaven-kissing hill;" and the Naiad or Dryad came gracefully forth as the personified genius of the stream or wood. All was subjected to the senses. The Christian religion, on the contrary, is essentially spiritual and abstracted; it is "the evidence of things unseen." In the Heathen mythology, form is every where predominant; in the Christian, we find only unlimited, undefined power. The imagination alone "broods over the immense abyss, and makes it pregnant." There is, in the habitual belief of an universal, invisible principle of all things, a vastness and obscurity which confounds our perceptions, while it exalts our piety. A mysterious awe surrounds the doctrines of the Christian faith: the infinite is everywhere before us, whether we turn to reflect on what is revealed to us of the divine nature or our own.

'History, as well as religion, has contributed to enlarge the bounds of imagination: and both together, by shewing past and future objects at an interminable distance, have accustomed the mind to contemplate and take an interest in the obscure and shadowy. The ancients were more circumscribed within "the ignorant present time,"—spoke only their own language,—were conversant only with their own customs,—were acquainted only with the events of their own history. The mere lapse of time then, aided by the art of printing, has served to accumulate an endless mass of mixed and contradictory materials; and, by extending our knowledge to a greater number of things, has made our particular ideas less perfect and distinct. The constant reference to a former state of manners and literature is a marked feature in modern poetry. We are always talking of the Greeks and Romans;—*they* never said any thing of us. This circumstance has tended to give a certain abstract elevation, and ethereal refinement to the mind, without strengthening it. We are lost in wonder at what has been done, and dare not think of emulating it. The earliest

modern poets, accordingly, may be conceived to hail the glories of the antique world, dawning through the dark abyss of time; while revelation, on the other hand, opened its path to the skies. So Dante represents himself as conducted by Virgil to the shades below; while Beatrice welcomes him to the abodes of the blest.'

The French are the only people in modern Europe, who have professedly imitated the ancients; but from their being utterly unlike the Greeks or Romans, have produced a dramatic style of their own, which is neither classical nor romantic. The same article contains the following censure of this style:

'The true poet identifies the reader with the characters he represents; the French poet only identifies him with himself. There is scarcely a single page of their tragedy which fairly throws nature open to you. It is tragedy in masquerade. We never get beyond conjecture and reasoning—beyond the general impression of the situation of the persons—beyond general reflections on their passions—beyond general descriptions of objects. We never get at that something more, which is what we are in search of, namely, what we ourselves should feel in the same situations. The true poet transports you to the scene—you see and hear what is passing—you catch, from the lips of the persons concerned, what lies nearest to their hearts;—the French poet takes you into his closet, and reads you a lecture upon it. The *chef d'œuvres* of their stage, then, are, at best, only ingenious paraphrases of nature. The dialogue is a tissue of common-places, of laboured declamations on human life, of learned casuistry on the passions, on virtue and vice, which any one else might make just as well as the person speaking; and yet, what the persons themselves would say, is all we want to know, and all for which the poet puts them into those situations.'

After the Restoration, that is, after the return of the exiled family of the Stuarts from France, our writers transplanted this artificial, monotonous, and imposing common-place style into England, by imitations and translations, where it could not be expected to take deep root, and produce wholesome fruits, and where it has indeed given rise to little but turgidity and rant in men of original force of genius, and to insipidity and formality in feebler copyists. Otway is the only writer of this school, who, in the lapse of a century and a half, has produced a tragedy (upon the classic or regular model) of indisputable excellence and lasting interest. The merit of Venice Preserved is not confined to its effect on the stage, or to the opportunity it affords for the display of the powers of the actors in it, of a Jaffier, a Pierre, a Belvidera: it reads as well in the closet, and loses little or none of its power of rivetting breathless attention, and stirring

the deepest yearnings of affection. It has passages of great beauty in themselves (detached from the fable) touches of true nature and pathos, though none equal or indeed comparable to what we meet with in Shakespear and other writers of that day; but the awful suspense of the situations, the conflict of duties and passions, the intimate bonds that unite the characters together, and that are violently rent asunder like the parting of soul and body, the solemn march of the tragical events to the fatal catastrophe that winds up and closes over all, give to this production of Otway's Muse a charm and power that bind it like a spell on the public mind, and have made it a proud and inseparable adjunct of the English stage. Thomson has given it due honour in his feeling verse, when he exclaims,

> 'See o'er the stage the Ghost of Hamlet stalks,
> Othello rages, poor Monimia mourns,
> And Belvidera pours her soul in love.'

There is a mixture of effeminacy, of luxurious and cowardly indulgence of his wayward sensibility, in Jaffier's character, which is, however, finely relieved by the bold intrepid villainy and contemptuous irony of Pierre, while it is excused by the difficulties of his situation, and the loveliness of Belvidera: but in the Orphan there is little else but this voluptuous effeminacy of sentiment and mawkish distress, which strikes directly at the root of that mental fortitude and heroic cast of thought which alone makes tragedy endurable—that renders its sufferings pathetic, or its struggles sublime. Yet there are lines and passages in it of extreme tenderness and beauty; and few persons, I conceive (judging from my own experience) will read it at a certain time of life without shedding tears over it as fast as the 'Arabian trees their medicinal gums.' Otway always touched the reader, for he had himself a heart. We may be sure that he blotted his page often with his tears, on which so many drops have since fallen from glistening eyes, 'that sacred pity had engendered there.' He had susceptibility of feeling and warmth of genius; but he had not equal depth of thought or loftiness of imagination, and indulged his mere sensibility too much, yielding to the immediate impression or emotion excited in his own mind, and not placing himself enough in the minds and situations of others, or following the workings of nature sufficiently with keenness of eye and strength of will into its heights and depths, its strongholds as well as its weak sides. The Orphan was attempted to be revived some time since with the advantage of Miss O'Neill playing the part of Monimia. It however did not entirely succeed (as it appeared at the time) from the plot turning all on one circumstance, and that hardly of a nature

to be obtruded on the public notice. The incidents and characters are taken almost literally from an old play by Robert Tailor, called Hog hath lost his Pearl.

Addison's Cato, in spite of Dennis's criticism, still retains possession of the stage with all its unities. My love and admiration for Addison is as great as any person's, let that other person be who he will; but it is not founded on his Cato, in extolling which Whigs and Tories contended in loud applause. The interest of this play (bating that shadowy regret that always clings to and flickers round the form of free antiquity) is confined to the declamation, which is feeble in itself, and not heard on the stage. I have seen Mr. Kemble in this part repeat the Soliloquy on Death without a line being distinctly heard; nothing was observable but the thoughtful motion of his lips, and the occasional extension of his hand in sign of doubts suggested or resolved; yet this beautiful and expressive dumb-show, with the propriety of his costume, and the elegance of his attitude and figure, excited the most lively interest, and kept attention even more on the stretch, to catch every imperfect syllable or speaking gesture. There is nothing, however, in the play to excite ridicule, or shock by absurdity, except the love-scenes which are passed over as what the spectator has no proper concern with: and however feeble or languid the interest produced by a dramatic exhibition, unless there is some positive stumbling-block thrown in the way, or gross offence given to an audience, it is generally suffered to linger on to a *euthanasia*, instead of dying a violent and premature death. If an author (particularly an author of high reputation) can contrive to preserve a uniform degree of insipidity, he is nearly sure of impunity. It is the mixture of great faults with splendid passages (the more striking from the contrast) that is inevitable damnation. Every one must have seen the audience tired out and watching for an opportunity to wreak their vengeance on the author, and yet not able to accomplish their wish, because no one part seemed more tiresome or worthless than another. The philosophic mantle of Addison's Cato, when it no longer spreads its graceful folds on the shoulders of John Kemble, will I fear fall to the ground; nor do I think Mr. Kean likely to pick it up again, with dauntless ambition or stoic pride, like that of Coriolanus. He could not play Cato (at least I think not) for the same reason that he will play Coriolanus. He can always play a living man; he cannot play a lifeless statue.

Dryden's plays have not come down to us, except in the collection of his printed works. The last of them that was on the list of regular acting plays was Don Sebastian. The Mask of Arthur and Emmeline was the other day revived at one of our theatres, without

much success. Alexander the Great is by Lee, who wrote some things in conjunction with Dryden, and who had far more power and passion of an irregular and turbulent kind, bordering upon constitutional morbidity, and who might have done better things (as we see from his Œdipus) had not his genius been perverted and rendered worse than abortive by carrying the vicious manner of his age to the greatest excess. Dryden's plays are perhaps the fairest specimen of what this manner was. I do not know how to describe it better than by saying that it is one continued and exaggerated common-place. All the characters are put into a swaggering attitude of dignity, and tricked out in the pomp of ostentatious drapery. The images are extravagant, yet not far-fetched; they are outrageous caricatures of obvious thoughts: the language oscillates between bombast and bathos: the characters are noisy pretenders to virtue, and shallow boasters in vice; the versification is laboured and monotonous, quite unlike the admirably free and flowing rhyme of his satires, in which he felt the true inspiration of his subject, and could find modulated sounds to express it. Dryden had no dramatic genius either in tragedy or comedy. In his plays he mistakes blasphemy for sublimity, and ribaldry for wit. He had so little notion of his own powers, that he has put Milton's Paradise Lost into dramatic rhyme to make Adam look like a fine gentleman; and has added a double love-plot to the Tempest, to 'relieve the killing languor and over-laboured lassitude' of that solitude of the imagination, in which Shakespear had left the inhabitants of his Enchanted Island. I will give two passages out of Don Sebastian in illustration of what I have said above of this mock-heroic style.

Almeyda advising Sebastian to fly from the power of Muley Moluch addresses him thus:

'Leave then the luggage of your fate behind;
To make your flight more easy, leave Almeyda.
Nor think me left a base, ignoble prey,
Exposed to this inhuman tyrant's lust.
My virtue is a guard beyond my strength;
And death my last defence within my call.'

Sebastian answers very gravely:

'Death may be called in vain, and cannot come:
Tyrants can tye him up from your relief:
Nor has a Christian privilege to die.
Alas, thou art too young in thy new faith:
Brutus and Cato might discharge their souls,
And give them furloughs for another world:
But we, like sentries, are obliged to stand,
In starless nights, and wait the appointed hour.'

Sebastian then urging her to prevent the tyrant's designs by an instant marriage, she says,

'Tis late to join, when we must part so soon.
Sebastian. Nay, rather let us haste it, e'er we part:
Our souls for want of that acquaintance here
May wander in the starry walks above,
And, forced on worse companions, miss ourselves.'

In the scene with Muley-Moluch where she makes intercession for Sebastian's life, she says,

'My father's, mother's, brother's death I pardon:
That's somewhat sure, a mighty sum of murder,
Of innocent and kindred blood struck off.
My prayers and penance shall discount for these,
And beg of Heaven to charge the bill on me:
Behold what price I offer, and how dear
To buy Sebastian's life.
Emperor. Let after-reckonings trouble fearful fools;
I'll stand the trial of those trivial crimes:
But since thou begg'st me to prescribe my terms,
The only I can offer are thy love;
And this one day of respite to resolve.
Grant or deny, for thy next word is Fate;
And Fate is deaf to Prayer.
Almeyda. May heav'n be so
At thy last breath to thine: I curse thee not:
For who can better curse the plague or devil
Than to be what they are? That curse be thine.
Now do not speak, Sebastian, for you need not,
But die, for I resign your life: Look heav'n,
Almeyda dooms her dear Sebastian's death
But is there heaven, for I begin to doubt?
The skies are hush'd; no grumbling thunders roll:
Now take your swing, ye impious: sin, unpunish'd.
Eternal Providence seems over-watch'd,
And with a slumbering nod assents to murder. . . .
Farewell, my lost Sebastian!
I do not beg, I challenge Justice now:
O Powers, if Kings be your peculiar care,
Why plays this wretch with your prerogative?
Now flash him dead, now crumble him to ashes:
Or henceforth live confined in your own palace;
And look not idly out upon a world
That is no longer yours.'

These passages, with many like them, will be found in the first scene of the third act.

The occasional striking expressions, such as that of souls at the

resurrection 'fumbling for their limbs,' are the language of strong satire and habitual disdain, not proper to tragic or serious poetry.

After Dryden there is no writer that has acquired much reputation as a tragic poet for the next hundred years. In the hands of his successors, the Smiths, the Hughes, the Hills, the Murphys, the Dr. Johnsons, of the reigns of George I. and II., tragedy seemed almost afraid to know itself, and certainly did not stand where it had done a hundred and fifty years before. It had degenerated by regular and studied gradations into the most frigid, insipid, and insignificant of all things. It faded to a shade, it tapered to a point, 'fine by degrees, and beautifully less.' I do not believe there is a single play of this period which could be read with any degree of interest or even patience, by a modern reader of poetry, if we except the productions of Southern, Lillo and Moore, the authors of the Gamester, Oroonoko, and Fatal Curiosity, and who instead of mounting on classic stilts and making rhetorical flourishes, went out of the established road to seek for truth and nature and effect in the commonest life and lowest situations. In short, the only tragedy of this period is that to which their productions gave a name, and which has been called in contradistinction by the French, and with an express provision for its merits and defects, the *tragedie bourgeoise*. An anecdote is told of the first of these writers by Gray, in one of his Letters, dated from Horace Walpole's country-seat, about the year 1740, who says, 'Old Mr. Southern is here, who is now above 80: a very agreeable old man, at least I think so when I look in his face, and think of Isabella and Oroonoko.' It is pleasant to see these traits of attachment and gratitude kept up in successive generations of poets to one another, and also to find that the same works of genius that have 'sent us weeping to our beds,' and made us 'rise sadder and wiser on the morrow morn,' have excited just the same fondness of affection in others before we were born; and it is to be hoped, will do so, after we are dead. Our best feelings, and those on which we pride ourselves most, and with most reason, are perhaps the commonest of all others.

Up to the present reign, and during the best part of it (with another solitary exception, Douglas, which with all its feebleness and extravagance, has in its style and sentiments a good deal of poetical and romantic beauty) tragedy wore the face of the Goddess of Dulness in the Dunciad, serene, torpid, sickly, lethargic, and affected, till it was roused from its trance by the blast of the French Revolution, and by the loud trampling of the German Pegasus on the English stage, which now appeared as pawing to get free from its ancient trammels, and rampant shook off the incumbrance of all former examples,

opinions, prejudices, and principles. If we have not been alive and well since this period, at least we have been alive, and it is better to be alive than dead. The German tragedy (and our own, which is only a branch of it) aims at effect, and produces it often in the highest degree; and it does this by going all the lengths not only of instinctive feeling, but of speculative opinion, and startling the hearer by overturning all the established maxims of society, and setting at nought all the received rules of composition. It cannot be said of this style that in it 'decorum is the principal thing.' It is the violation of decorum, that is its first and last principle, the beginning, middle, and end. It is an insult and defiance to Aristotle's definition of tragedy. The action is not grave, but extravagant: the fable is not probable, but improbable: the favourite characters are not only low, but vicious: the sentiments are such as do not become the person into whose mouth they are put, nor that of any other person: the language is a mixture of metaphysical jargon and flaring prose: the moral is immorality. In spite of all this, a German tragedy is a good thing. It is a fine hallucination: it is a noble madness, and as there is a pleasure in madness, which none but madmen know, so there is a pleasure in reading a German play to be found in no other. The world have thought so: they go to see the Stranger, they go to see Lovers' Vows and Pizarro, they have their eyes wide open all the time, and almost cry them out before they come away, and therefore they go again. There is something in the style that hits the temper of men's minds; that, if it does not hold the mirrour up to nature, yet 'shews the very age and body of the time its form and pressure.' It embodies, it sets off and aggrandizes in all the pomp of action, in all the vehemence of hyperbolical declamation, in scenery, in dress, in music, in the glare of the senses, and the glow of sympathy, the extreme opinions which are floating in our time, and which have struck their roots deep and wide below the surface of the public mind. We are no longer as formerly heroes in warlike enterprise; martyrs to religious faith; but we are all the partisans of a political system, and devotees to some theory of moral sentiments. The modern style of tragedy is not assuredly made up of pompous common-place, but it is a tissue of philosophical, political, and moral paradoxes. I am not saying whether these paradoxes are true or false: all that I mean to state is, that they are utterly at variance with old opinions, with established rules and existing institutions; that it is this tug of war between the inert prejudice and the startling novelty which is to batter it down (first on the stage of the theatre, and afterwards on the stage of the world) that gives the excitement and the zest. We see the natural always pitted against the social

man; and the majority who are not of the privileged classes, take part with the former. The hero is a sort of metaphysical Orson, armed not with teeth and a club, but with hard sayings and unanswerable sentences, ticketted and labelled with extracts and mottos from the modern philosophy. This common representative of mankind is a natural son of some feudal lord, or wealthy baron: and he comes to claim as a matter of course and of simple equity, the rich reversion of the title and estates to which he has a right by the bounty of nature and the privilege of his birth. This produces a very edifying scene, and the proud, unfeeling, unprincipled baron is hooted from the stage. A young woman, a sempstress, or a waiting maid of much beauty and accomplishment, who would not think of matching with a fellow of low birth or fortune for the world, falls in love with the heir of an immense estate out of pure regard to his mind and person, and thinks it strange that rank and opulence do not follow as natural appendages in the train of sentiment. A lady of fashion, wit, and beauty, forfeits the sanctity of her marriage-vow, but preserves the inviolability of her sentiments and character,

'Pure in the last recesses of the mind'—

and triumphs over false opinion and prejudice, like gold out of the fire, the brighter for the ordeal. A young man turns robber and captain of a gang of banditti; and the wonder is to see the heroic ardour of his sentiments, his aspirations after the most godlike goodness and unsullied reputation, working their way through the repulsiveness of his situation, and making use of fortune only as a foil to nature. The principle of contrast and contradiction is here made use of, and no other. All qualities are reversed: virtue is always at odds with vice, 'which shall be which:' the internal character and external situation, the actions and the sentiments, are never in accord: you are to judge of everything by contraries: those that exalt themselves are abased, and those that should be humbled are exalted: the high places and strongholds of power and greatness are crumbled in the dust; opinions totter, feelings are brought into question, and the world is turned upside down, with all things in it!—'There is some soul of goodness in things evil'—and there is some soul of goodness in all this. The world and every thing in it is not just what it ought to be, or what it pretends to be; or such extravagant and prodigious paradoxes would be driven from the stage—would meet with sympathy in no human breast, high or low, young or old. *There's something rotten in the state of Denmark.* Opinion is not truth: appearance is not reality: power is not beneficence: rank is not wisdom: nobility is not the only virtue: riches are not happiness: desert and success

are different things: actions do not always speak the character any more than words. We feel this, and do justice to the romantic extravagance of the German Muse.

In Germany, where this *outré* style of treating every thing established and adventitious was carried to its height, there were, as we learn from the Sorrows of Werter, seven-and-twenty ranks in society, each raised above the other, and of which the one above did not speak to the one below it. Is it wonderful that the poets and philosophers of Germany, the discontented men of talent, who thought and mourned for themselves and their fellows, the Goethes, the Lessings, the Schillers, the Kotzebues, felt a sudden and irresistible impulse by a convulsive effort to tear aside this factitious drapery of society, and to throw off that load of bloated prejudice, of maddening pride and superannuated folly, that pressed down every energy of their nature and stifled the breath of liberty, of truth and genius in their bosoms? These Titans of our days tried to throw off the dead weight that encumbered them, and in so doing, warred not against heaven, but against earth. The same writers (as far as I have seen) have made the only incorrigible Jacobins, and their school of poetry is the only real school of Radical Reform.

In reasoning, truth and soberness may prevail, on which side soever they meet: but in works of imagination novelty has the advantage over prejudice; that which is striking and unheard-of, over that which is trite and known before, and that which gives unlimited scope to the indulgence of the feelings and the passions (whether erroneous or not) over that which imposes a restraint upon them.

I have half trifled with this subject; and I believe I have done so, because I despaired of finding language for some old rooted feelings I have about it, which a theory could neither give or can it take away. The Robbers was the first play I ever read: and the effect it produced upon me was the greatest. It stunned me like a blow, and I have not recovered enough from it to describe how it was. There are impressions which neither time nor circumstances can efface. Were I to live much longer than I have any chance of doing, the books which I read when I was young, I can never forget. Five-and-twenty years have elapsed since I first read the translation of the Robbers, but they have not blotted the impression from my mind: it is here still, an old dweller in the chambers of the brain. The scene in particular in which Moor looks through his tears at the evening sun from the mountain's brow, and says in his despair, 'It was my wish like him to live, like him to die: it was an idle thought, a boy's conceit,' took fast hold of my imagination, and that sun has to me never set! The last interview in Don Carlos between the

two lovers, in which the injured bride struggles to burst the prison-house of her destiny, in which her hopes and youth lie coffined, and buried, as it were, alive, under the oppression of unspeakable anguish, I remember gave me a deep sense of suffering and a strong desire after good, which has haunted me ever since. I do not like Schiller's later style so well. His Wallenstein, which is admirably and almost literally translated by Mr. Coleridge, is stately, thoughtful, and imaginative: but where is the enthusiasm, the throbbing of hope and fear, the mortal struggle between the passions; as if all the happiness or misery of a life were crowded into a moment, and the die was to be cast that instant? Kotzebue's best work I read first in Cumberland's imitation of it in the Wheel of Fortune; and I confess that that style of sentiment which seems to make of life itself a long-drawn endless sigh, has something in it that pleases me, in spite of rules and criticism. Goethe's tragedies are (those that I have seen of them, his Count Egmont, Stella, &c.) constructed upon the second or inverted manner of the German stage, with a deliberate design to avoid all possible effect and interest, and this object is completely accomplished. He is however spoken of with enthusiasm almost amounting to idolatry by his countrymen, and those among ourselves who import heavy German criticism into this country in shallow flat-bottomed unwieldy intellects. Madame De Stael speaks of one passage in his Iphigenia, where he introduces a fragment of an old song, which the Furies are supposed to sing to Tantalus in hell, reproaching him with the times when he sat with the Gods at their golden tables, and with his after-crimes that hurled him from heaven, at which he turns his eyes from his children and hangs his head in mournful silence. This is the true sublime. Of all his works I like his Werter best, nor would I part with it at a venture, even for the Memoirs of Anastasius the Greek, whoever is the author; nor ever cease to think of the times, 'when in the fine summer evenings they saw the frank, noble-minded enthusiast coming up from the valley,' nor of 'the high grass that by the light of the departing sun waved in the breeze over his grave.'

But I have said enough to give an idea of this modern style, compared with our own early Dramatic Literature, of which I had to treat.—I have done: and if I have done no better, the fault has been in me, not in the subject. My liking to this grew with my knowledge of it: but so did my anxiety to do it justice. I somehow felt it as a point of honour not to make my hearers think less highly of some of these old writers than I myself did of them. If I have praised an author, it was because I liked him: if I have quoted a passage, it was because it pleased me in the reading: if I have spoken contemptuously

of any one, it has been reluctantly. It is no easy task that a writer, even in so humble a class as myself, takes upon him; he is scouted and ridiculed if he fails; and if he succeeds, the enmity and cavils and malice with which he is assailed, are just in proportion to his success. The coldness and jealousy of his friends not unfrequently keep pace with the rancour of his enemies. They do not like you a bit the better for fulfilling the good opinion they always entertained of you. They would wish you to be always promising a great deal, and doing nothing, that they may answer for the performance. That shows their sagacity and does not hurt their vanity. An author wastes his time in painful study and obscure researches, to gain a little breath of popularity, meets with nothing but vexation and disappointment in ninety-nine instances out of a hundred; or when he thinks to grasp the luckless prize, finds it not worth the trouble—the perfume of a minute, fleeting as a shadow, hollow as a sound; 'as often got without merit as lost without deserving.' He thinks that the attainment of acknowledged excellence will secure him the expression of those feelings in others, which the image and hope of it had excited in his own breast, but instead of that, he meets with nothing (or scarcely nothing) but squint-eyed suspicion, idiot wonder, and grinning scorn.—It seems hardly worth while to have taken all the pains he has been at for this!

In youth we borrow patience from our future years: the spring of hope gives us courage to act and suffer. A cloud is upon our onward path, and we fancy that all is sunshine beyond it. The prospect seems endless, because we do not know the end of it. We think that life is long, because art is so, and that, because we have much to do, it is well worth doing: or that no exertions can be too great, no sacrifices too painful, to overcome the difficulties we have to encounter. Life is a continued struggle to be what we are not, and to do what we cannot. But as we approach the goal, we draw in the reins; the impulse is less, as we have not so far to go; as we see objects nearer, we become less sanguine in the pursuit: it is not the despair of not attaining, so much as knowing there is nothing worth obtaining, and the fear of having nothing left even to wish for, that damps our ardour, and relaxes our efforts; and if the mechanical habit did not increase the facility, would, I believe, take away all inclination or power to do any thing. We stagger on the few remaining paces to the end of our journey; make perhaps one final effort; and are glad when our task is done!

THE END.

NOTES

NOTES

LECTURES ON THE ENGLISH COMIC WRITERS

HAZLITT'S third course of public lectures, composed at Winterslow, and delivered at the Surrey Institution, Great Surrey Street, in November and December 1818 and January 1819. Keats was prevented from attending, but Crabb Robinson and Talfourd have left us accounts. In the interval between the previous course on the *English Poets* and the present one Hazlitt was severely attacked by the *Quarterly* and *Blackwood's Magazine*, and it appears that his popularity as a lecturer suffered. Shortly after the conclusion of these lectures he answered his principal critic in the *Letter to Gifford*. See the introductory note to the following course, on the *Age of Elizabeth* (*post*, p. 386).

In the so-called 'third' edition of the *Lectures* (see Bibliographical Note) several passages 'collected by the author, apparently with a view to a reprint of the volume,' were interpolated by his son. The sources of these passages, which are all reprinted elsewhere in the present edition, are noted below.

I. INTRODUCTORY

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2. Biblio. Note. '*It is a very good office*,' *etc.* Cf. *The Tatler*, No. 95.

8. *The tale of Slaukenbergius.* *Tristram Shandy*, Book IV.

9. '*There is something in the misfortunes*,' *etc.* 'Dans l'adversité de nos meilleurs amis, nous trouvons toujours quelque chose qui ne nous déplait pas.' Rochefoucauld, *Maximes et Réflexions Morales*, CCXLI.

'*They were talking*,' *etc.* Farquhar's *Beaux' Stratagem*, Act III. Scene I.

Lord Foppington. In *The Relapse* of Vanbrugh. See *ante*, p. 82.

10. *Aretine laughed himself to death.* Pietro Aretino (1492–1557). The story is that while laughing he fell from a stool and was killed.

Keep our countenance . . . at a wedding. Cf. Lamb to Southey (Aug. 9, 1815): 'I was at Hazlitt's marriage, and had like to have been turned out several times during the ceremony. Anything awful makes me laugh. I misbehaved once at a funeral.' (*Letters*, ed. Lucas, 1912, I. 494.)

Throwing the stocking. 'An old custom according to which on the wedding night the bride's stocking was thrown among the guests; it was supposed that the person hit by it would be the first of the company to be married.' *N.E.D.*

Sir Thomas More jested. See Addison, *Spectator*, No. 349.

Rabelais. See Bacon's *Apophthegms*, xliii.

Wycherley. See a letter from Pope to Blount, Jan. 21, 1715–16 (*Works*, ed. Elwin and Courthope, VI. 366).

The dialogue between Aimwell and Gibbet. *The Beaux' Stratagem*, Act III. Scene 2.

Mr. Emery's Robert Tyke. In Thomas Morton's *School of Reform* (1805). See *A View of the English Stage* (vol. V. p. 235).

11. *The Liar.* By Samuel Foote (1762.)

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11. *The Busy Body.* By Susannah Centlivre (1709).

The history of hobby-horses. See *Tristram Shandy*, Book I. Chaps. 24–25.

'Ever lifted leg.' Cf. 'A better never lifted leg.' Burns, *Tam o' Shanter*, 80.

12. *Malvolio's punishment, etc.* *Twelfth Night*, Act IV. Scene 2.

Christopher's Sly's drunken transformation. *The Taming of the Shrew*, Induction, Scene 2.

Parson Adams's fall, etc. See *Joseph Andrews*, Book III. Chap. 7, Book IV. Chap. 14, and Book II. Chap. 12.

Baltimore House. In what is now Russell Square.

14. *The author of the Ancient Mariner.* Cf. a passage in the *Plain Speaker* essay 'On Dreams' (vol. XII. pp. 23–24).

Bishop Atterbury. Cf. the same passage, and see Pope's *Works* (ed. Elwin and Courthope), IX. 21–4.

'Favours secret,' etc. Burns, *Tam o' Shanter*, 48.

'The soldier's,' etc. Cf. *Hamlet*, III. I. 159.

Horner, etc. Horner, in Wycherley's *The Country Wife*; Millamant, in Congreve's *The Way of the World*; Tattle and Miss Prue, in Congreve's *Love for Love*; Archer and Cherry, in Farquhar's *The Beaux' Stratagem*; Mrs. Amlet, in Vanbrugh's *The Confederacy* (see Act III. Scene 1); Valentine and Angelica, in *Love for Love*; Miss Peggy, in Garrick's *The Country Girl*, adapted from *The Country Wife*; Anne Page, in *The Merry Wives of Windsor.*

15. *'The age of comedy,' etc.* Hazlitt is adapting a favourite passage from Burke: 'But the age of chivalry is gone,' etc. (*Reflections on the French Revolution*, ed. Payne, p. 89.)

The common epigram. By the poet Young. See Spence's *Anecdotes*, p. 378.

16. *The sun had long since.* *Hudibras*, II., II. 29–38.

By this the northern waggoner. *The Faerie Queene*, I., II. 1.

At last the golden. *Ibid.*, I., V. 2.

17. *But now a sport.* *Hudibras*, I., I. 675–688.

Mr. Sheridan's description, etc. In his speech on the Definitive Treaty of Peace, May 14, 1802, given by Hazlitt in *The Eloquence of the British Senate.*

The sarcastic reply of Porson. A favourite Hazlitt quotation. Cf. Byron's note in *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1811): 'Thalaba was one of those poems "which" in the words of Porson, "will be read when Homer and Virgil are forgotten, but—*not till then.*"' William Maltby, Porson's successor in the librarianship of the London Institution, in his *Porsoniana* included in Dyce's *Table Talk of Samuel Rogers* (1887, p. 352) suggests that what Porson said was that 'Madoc will be read—when Homer and Virgil are forgotten,' and that the improvement (?) of the remark is Byron's.

Sir Robert Walpole's definition. Cf. Rochefoucauld, *Maximes*, CCXCVIII.

Voltaire's saying. Cf. vol. XII. p. 212.

18. *Compound for sins.* *Hudibras*, I., I., 215–216.

There's but the twinkling. *Ibid.*, II., III., 957–964.

Now night descending. Cf. *The Dunciad*, I. 89–90.

Mr. Locke's celebrated definition of wit. Hazlitt is drawing here and in the footnote on his lecture 'On the Writings of Hobbes' (vol. II. of the present edition). Cf. also 'Mr. Locke a Great Plagiarist' in the later volume devoted to his journalism.

19. *Harris.* James Harris (1709–1780), author of *Hermes, or a Philosophical Inquiry concerning Universal Grammar* (1751).

20. *'A foregone conclusion.'* *Othello* III. 3. 428.

'Comes in such,' etc. *Hamlet*, I. 4. 43.

'Soul-killing lies,' etc. Lamb, *John Woodvil*, Act II.

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21. *The fine sarcasm of Junius.* Letter XLIX.

'And ever,' etc. Cf. *L'Allegro*, 135–6.

The reply of the author, etc. This was Richard Owen Cambridge (1717–1802), contributor to Edward Moore's *The World* (1753–1756). Cf. Hazlitt's *Atlas* paper, 'Common Fame,' in the later volume devoted to his journalism.

'Full of sound and fury,' etc. *Macbeth*, v. 5. 27.

'For thin partitions,' etc. Dryden, *Absalom and Achitophel*, I. 164.

Mr. Curran's bon mots. See 'On the Conversation of Authors' in *The Plain Speaker.*

22. *Hæret lateri, etc.* *Æneid*, IV. 73.

The Duke of Buckingham's saying. 'And give me leave to tell your lordships, by the way, that statutes are not like women, for they are not one jot the worse for being old.' Speech on the Dissolution of Parliament, 1676, included by Hazlitt in *The Eloquence of the British Senate.*

Mr. Addison, indeed. *The Spectator*, No. 61.

Mandrake. In Farquhar's *The Twin Rivals*, Act II. Scene 2.

Sir Hugh Evans. *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Act I. Scene I.

23. *'From the sublime,' etc.* 'Du sublime au ridicule il n'y a qu'un pas.' See *Life of Napoleon*, vol. XV. p. 113 and note.

24. *Mr. Canning's court Parodies, etc.* In the *Anti-Jacobin* (1797–1798).

The Rejected Addresses. By James and Horace Smith, published in 1812. The parody of Crabbe was by James Smith.

Lear and the Fool. The references in this paragraph are to Act I. Scene 4.

'Tis with our judgments. Pope, *Essay on Criticism*, 9–10.

25. *'He is the cause,' etc.* Cf. 2 *Henry IV.*, I 2. II.

'That perilous stuff,' etc. Cf. *Macbeth*, v. 3. 44.

'Imitate humanity,' etc. Cf. *Hamlet*, III. 2. 39.

26. *Barrow's celebrated description.* Isaac Barrow's (1630–77) sermon 'Against Foolish Talking and Jesting.'

27. *Who did essay.* *The Faerie Queene*, II., VI., 7.

28. *I know but little.* Cf. Hazlitt's letter, while engaged in the composition of these lectures, declining the invitation to contribute the article on 'Drama' to the *Encyclopædia Britannica*: 'I know something about Congreve, but nothing at all of Aristophanes, and yet I conceive that the writer of an article on the *Drama* ought to be as well acquainted with the one as the other.' (*Life*, p. 265.) See, however, his *Edinburgh Review* paper, 'Schlegel on the Drama.'

The fable of the halcyon. This is no longer considered to be Lucian's.

The heroic eulogy on Bacchus. Loeb edition, I. 47 *et seq.*

Barnaby Brittle. Founded on Molière's *George Dandin*, and produced at Covent Garden in 1791.

29. *The strictures of Rousseau.* Lettre à M. D'Alembert. *Petits Chefs-d'œuvre* (ed. Firmin-Didot), pp. 405 *et seq.*

An exquisite . . . defence. See *La Critique de l'École des Femmes*, Scene 6.

'An equal want,' etc. 'But equally a want of books and men.' Wordsworth, *Poems dedicated to National Independence and Liberty*, XV.

I have already spoken my mind. In *Lectures on the English Poets* (vol. V. pp. 111–13).

II. ON SHAKSPEARE AND BEN JONSON

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30. *Dr. Johnson thought.* See his *Preface to Shakespeare* (*Works*, Oxford, 1825, V. 113).

'Smit with the love of sacred song.' *Paradise Lost*, III. 29.

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31. *There is but one, etc.* Hazlitt is recalling Dryden's line, 'Within that circle none durst walk but he.' (Prologue to *The Tempest.*)

Vanbrugh's City Wives' Confederacy. That is, the patent theatres version of *The Confederacy*, produced in 1779.

'*Not to speak it profanely.*' *Hamlet*, III. 2. 34.

'*Like an unsubstantial pageant faded.*' *The Tempest*, IV. 1. 155.

32. '*He is the leviathan,*' *etc.* Hazlitt is adapting Burke: 'The Duke of Bedford is the leviathan among all the creatures of the Crown. He tumbles about his unwieldy bulk; he plays and frolics in the ocean of the royal bounty.' *A Letter to a Noble Lord* (*Works*, Bohn, v. 129).

'*A consummation,*' *etc.* *Hamlet*, III. 1. 63.

The description of Queen Mab. In *Romeo and Juliet*, Act I. Scene 4.

'*The shade of melancholy boughs.*' *As You Like It*, II. 7. 111.

'*Give a very echo,*' *etc.* *Twelfth Night*, II. 4. 21.

'*Oh! it came,*' *etc.* *Ibid.*, I. 1. 5.

33. '*Covers a multitude of sins.*' 1 *Peter*, iv. 8.

The ligament, etc. Cf. 'And that ligament, fine as it was, was never broken.' *Tristram Shandy*, Book vi, Chap. 10.

The Society for the Suppression of Vice. Cf. *The Round Table*, vol. IV. p. 60 and note.

He has been merry. 2 *Henry IV.*, v. 3. 42.

Heard the chimes at midnight. *Ibid.*, III. 2. 228.

34. *Come on, come on.* *Ibid.*, III. 2. 1 *et seq.*

35. '*One touch of nature,*' *etc.* *Troilus and Cressida*, III. 3. 175.

'*It is apprehensive,*' *etc.* 2 *Henry IV.*, IV. 3. 107.

36. *Go to church.* *Twelfth Night*, I. 3. 136.

'*And furnishing matter for innocent mirth.*'

Tattle and Sparkish. In Congreve's *Love for Love* and Wycherley's *The Country Wife*, respectively.

'*All beyond Hyde Park,*' *etc.* Sir George Etherege's *The Man of Mode*, Act v. Scene 2.

'*Lay waste a country gentleman.*' Cf. Hazlitt's 'Character of Cobbett,' vol. VIII., p. 50: 'He "lays waste" a city orator or Member of Parliament.'

Lord Foppington. In Vanbrugh's *The Relapse.*

'*The prince of coxcombs,*' *etc.* *The Relapse*, Act III. Scene 1.

'*Manners damnable,*' *etc.* Cf. *As You Like It*, III. 2. 40–46.

37. '*Airy nothing.*' *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, v. 1. 16.

'*Love's golden shaft,*' *etc.* Cf. *Twelfth Night*, I. 1. 35.

'*There the mind,*' *etc.* 'Therein the patient must minister to himself.' *Macbeth*, v. 3. 46.

'*Of solitude,*' *etc.* Cf. 'Of solitude and melancholy born.' Beattie, *The Minstrel*, I. 56.

38. '*In the crust of formality.*' Cf. 'All the inward acts of worship, issuing from the native strength of the soul, run out lavishly to the upper skin, and there harden into a crust of formality.' Milton, *Of Reformation in England*, Book I.

To wanton in the idle summer's air. Cf. 'That idles in the wanton summer air.' *Romeo and Juliet*, II. 6. 19.

39. '*Does mad and fantastic execution,*' *etc.* *Troilus and Cressida*, v. 5. 38. 'Fantastic' is misprinted 'frantic' in third edition.

Schlegel observes, etc. In his *Lectures on Dramatic Literature* (Bohn, p. 464).

'*Lively, audible,*' *etc.* 'Waking, audible, and full of vent.' *Coriolanus*, IV. 5. 238.

40. *Captain Otter.* In *The Silent Woman* (1609).

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40. '*Bless'd conditions.*' Cf. *Othello*, II. 1. 255.
   '*If th be wise*,' *etc.* Cf. 'Let it be virtuous to be obstinate.' *Coriolanus*, v. 3. 26.
41. '*The gayest, happiest attitude of things.*' Akenside, *Pleasures of the Imagination*, I. 30.
   Aliquando sufflaminandus erat. Ben Jonson's *Discoveries*, LXIV.
   The late Mr. Horne Tooke. See the notes to Hazlitt's *New and Improved English Grammar*, in vol. II., and *The Spirit of the Age.*
   Howell's Letters. The *Familiar Letters* of James Howell were published 1645-55 (ed. Jacobs, 1892, pp. 403-4).
42. *I have already given a detailed account.* In *Characters of Shakespear's Plays* (1817).
   l. 23. In the third edition the following sentence is interpolated: 'It has been observed of this author, that he painted not so much human nature as temporary manners; not the characters of men, but their humours; that is to say, peculiarities of phrase, modes of dress, gesture, etc., which becoming obsolete, and being in themselves altogether arbitrary and fantastical, have become unintelligible and uninteresting.' The sentence is a variant on the reference to Schlegel already occurring (*ante*, p. 39).
   The meeting between Morose and Epicene. Act II. Scene 3.
   '*O'erstep the modesty of nature.*' *Hamlet*, III. 2. 21.
43. *The scene between Sir Amorous La Foole and Sir John Daw*, *etc.* See *The Silent Woman*, Act IV. Scene 2, and *Twelfth Night*, Act III. Scene 4.
   Which Milton says. 'Decorum, which is the grand masterpiece to observe.' *On Education.*
   Truewit. In *The Silent Woman.*
   Thus Peregrine, in Volpone, etc. Act II. Scene 1. *Volpone* was first acted in 1605.
   This play was Dryden's favourite. There is an apparent *non sequitur* here: Hazlitt is again referring, of course, to *The Silent Woman*, of which Dryden gives an 'Examen' in his *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* (*Select Essays*, ed. Ker, I. 83 *et seq.*).
   Truewit says. *The Silent Woman*, Act IV. Scene 2.
   '*Even though we should hold*,' *etc.* Cf. *Hamlet*, II. 2. 207-9.
   The directions for making love. *The Silent Woman*, Act IV. Scene 1.
44. *Hood an ass.* *Volpone*, Act I. Scene 1.
   Every Man in his Humour. First acted in 1598, this play held the stage until Hazlitt's time. Cf. his notice of Kean's Kitely in *A View of the English Stage*, vol. V., p. 310. Dickens played the part of Bobadil in 1845.
   '*As dry as the remainder biscuit after a voyage.*' *As You Like It*, II. 7. 39
   His well-known proposal. *Every Man in his Humour*, Act IV. Scene 5.
45. *The scene in which Brainworm.* *Ibid.* Act I. Scene 2.
   Bartholomew Fair. Produced in 1614.
   The Alchymist. Produced in 1610.
   One glorious scene. Act II. Scene 1. Crabb Robinson records the effect produced by Hazlitt's rendering of this scene (*Life*, p. 273).
48. *Beaumont and Fletcher.* Cf. *post*, p. 261 note.
   The Inconstant. Farquhar's comedy (1703).
49. *Mrs. Jordan.* Hazlitt's favourite, Mrs. Jordan, died on May 24, 1817.

III. ON COWLEY, BUTLER, SUCKLING, ETHEREGE, ETC.

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49. '*The metaphysical poets*,' *etc.* Johnson, Life of Cowley in *The Lives of the Poets.*
   The father of criticism. Aristotle. See the *Poetics.*
50. '*Hitch into a rhyme.*' Pope, *Imitations of Horace*, Satires, Book II., Satire I. 78.
51. *Her outward* '*impress.*' Cf. *The Excursion*, vii. 560.
   '*And though reclaim'd*,' *etc.* Cowper, *The Task*, IV. 723-5.

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51. *Donne.* John Donne (1573–1631).
   '*Heaved pantingly forth.*' *King Lear*, IV. 3. 28–9.
   '*Buried quick again.*' Cf. *Hamlet*, V. I. 301.
52. *A lame and impotent conclusion.* Cf. *Othello*, II. I. 162
53. '*To the pure,*' *etc.* *Titus* I. 15.
   Bishop Hall's Satires. The Satires of Joseph Hall (1574–1656), Bishop of Exeter (1627) and of Norwich (1641), were published in 1597 and 1598 under the title of *Virgidemiarum, Sixe Bookes.* For Pope's admiration of him see *Works*, ed. Elwin and Courthope, III. 423.
   Sir John Davies (1569–1626). His *Orchestra, or a Poeme of Dancing*, appeared in 1596, his *Nosce Teipsum*, a poem on the immortality of the soul, in 1599.
   Crashaw. Richard Crashaw (1612?–1649).
   Seething brains.' *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, V. I. 4.
   The celebrated Latin epigram. 'Nympha pudica Deum vidit, et erubuit,' rendered by Dryden 'The conscious water saw its God and blush'd.'
   The contest between the Musician and the Nightingale. *Musick's Duel*, a version from the Latin of the Roman Jesuit Strada, paraphrased also by Ford in *The Lover's Melancholy*, Act I. Scene I. Cf. *Lectures on the Age of Elizabeth, ante*, p. 318.
   Davenant's Gondibert. The *Gondibert* of Sir William D'Avenant (1606–1668), published in 1651.
54. *Yet on that wall.* *Gondibert*, II. V. 33.
   Marvel . . . on whom I have already bestowed praise. Cf. *Lectures on the English Poets*, vol. V. p. 83.
   And sat not as a meat. *The Character of Holland*, 30. Cf. Leigh Hunt on this passage: 'Hazlitt made the same observation to Charles Lamb and myself, and was entering into a very acute discourse to prove that we ought *not to laugh* at such exaggerations, when we were forced to interrupt him by a fit of laughter uncontrollable.' *Wit and Humour*, 1846.
   A poem of Marvell's. 'An Horatian Ode, upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland,' stanzas 13–16. This poem was cancelled from all the early editions, and first published in the quarto of 1776. Hazlitt makes no mention of it in his *Lectures on the English Poets*, but makes acquaintance with it in time to include it in *Select British Poets* (1824).
   One whose praise, etc. Lamb, no doubt.
   Shadwell. Thomas Shadwell (1642?–1692). *The Libertine* appeared in 1676.
   Carew. Thomas Carew (1598?–1639?).
   His masque. Performed in Feb. 1633–4.
55. *Milton's name is included by Dr. Johnson.* In his *Life of Cowley.*
   '*Aggregation of ideas.*' 'Sublimity,' says Johnson, *ibid.*, 'is produced by aggregation, and littleness by dispersion.'
   '*Inimitable on earth,*' *etc.* *Paradise Lost*, III. 508–9.
   Suckling. Sir John Suckling (1609–1642). Johnson refers to him in his *Life of Cowley* as one of the 'immediate successors' of the metaphysical poets.
   '*Of the court, courtly.*' Cf. 'Of the earth, earthy.' I *Corinthians*, XV. 47.
57. *Cowley.* Abraham Cowley (1618–1667).
   The Phœnix Pindar. *The Praise of Pindar*, 2.
   '*Sailing with supreme dominion,*' *etc.* Gray, *The Progress of Poesy*, III. 3.
58. *He compares Bacon to Moses.* 'Bacon, like Moses, led us forth at last.' *To the Royal Society.*
59. *Delights of human kind.* Cf. 'Titus Vespasian was not more the delight of human kind.' Dryden, *Discourse concerning the Original and Progress of Satire.*
60. *Cowley's Essays.* Published in 1668.

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61. *Cutter of Coleman Street. The Guardian* acted at Cambridge in 1641 and printed in 1650, afterwards re-written and produced at Lincoln's Inn Fields as 'Cutter of Coleman Street' in 1661.

62. '*Call you this backing your friends?*' Cf. 1 *Henry IV.*, II. 4. 166

Butler's Hudibras. The three Parts of *Hudibras* appeared in 1662, 1663, and 1678, respectively.

Dr. Campbell. Dr. George Campbell (1719–1796) published his *Philosophy of Rhetoric* in 1776.

'*Narrow his mind,' etc.* Goldsmith's *Retaliation*, 31–2.

Dr. Zachary Grey. Zachary Grey's (1688–1766) edition of *Hudibras* appeared in 1744.

63. *Which I have enumerated. Ante*, p. 26.

Note. *And have not two, etc. Hudibras*, II. II. 297–8. *Her voice.* II. I. 616–20. *No Indian Prince.* II. II. 273–4. *And in his nose.* I. II. 255–6. *Whose noise whets.* I. II. 109–10. *Replete with strange.* I. II. 225–6. *His tawny beard.* I. I. 241–52. *This sword.* I. I. 375–8.

64. Note. *And straight another. Hudibras*, II. II. 831–2. *That deals.* II. III. 107–8. *The mighty Tottipottimoy.* II. II. 421–2. *For Hebrew roots.* I. I 59–60. *Those wholesale critics.* II. III. 809–10. *This we.* I. II. 1099–1102.

65. '*Pilloried,' etc.* 'Stood pilloried on infamy's high stage.' Cowper, *Hope*, 556.

'*As one grain of wheat,' etc.* Cf. *Merchant of Venice*, I. I. 115

The account of Sidrophel and Whackum. Hudibras, Part II. Canto II.

Note. *Thus stopp'd. Hudibras*, I. III. 951–2. *And setting his right foot.* I. III. 82–4. *At this the knight.* II. II. 541–4. *The knight himself.* I. II. 1123–6. *And raised.* I. II. 95–6. *And Hudibras.* II. II. 661–2. *Both thought.* II. II. 577–90.

67. *The burlesque description, etc. Hudibras*, I. II. 1129 *et seq.*

As when an owl. Ibid., I. III. 403–6.

The queen of night. Ibid., III. I. 1321–6.

Butler's Remains. The Genuine Remains in Verse and Prose of Mr. Samuel Butler, not published till 1759.

Reduce all tragedy. Butler, *Upon Critics*, 17–42.

68. *Etherege.* Sir George Etherege (1635?–1691) wrote three comedies, *The Comical Revenge, or Love in a Tub* (1664), *She Would if she Could* (1667), and *The Man of Mode, or Sir Fopling Flutter* (1676).

'*Tames his wild heart,' etc.* Cf. *Much Ado About Nothing*, III. I. 112

'*Like the morn,' etc. Paradise Lost*, V. 310–11.

The Wild Gallant. First performed February 1662–3. See Act II. Scene I.

69. *Sir Martin Mar-all.* Produced in 1667, and founded on a translation by the Duke of Newcastle of Molière's *L'Étourdi. The Busy Body*, by Mrs. Centlivre, appeared in 1709.

Otway's comedies. The Cheats of Scapin (adapted from Molière) (1677), *Friendship in Fashion* (1678), *The Soldier's Fortune* (1681), and *The Atheist* (1684).

Rehearsal. The Duke of Buckingham's (1628–1687) *The Rehearsal*, first published in 1672.

Knight of the Burning Pestle. Written about 1611 and published in 1613.

The Committee. By Sir Robert Howard (1626–1698), produced in 1662. Thomas Knight's *The Honest Thieves*, an adaptation, was acted at Covent Garden in 1797, about which date Hazlitt presumably read it.

'*Mitigated into courtiers,' etc.* Cf. Burke, *Reflections on the French Revolution* (ed. Payne, p. 90).

The great bed of Ware. Referred to by Shakespeare (*Twelfth Night*, III. 2. 53), and now at Rye House.

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IV. ON WYCHERLEY, CONGREVE, VANBRUGH, AND FARQUHAR

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70. '*Graceful ornament to the civil order,' etc.* Cf. Burke, *Reflections on the French Revolution* (ed. Payne, p. 164).

Waller's Sacharissa. Lady Dorothy Sidney, eldest daughter of the second Earl of Leicester.

Wycherley, etc. William Wycherley (1640?–1715), William Congreve (1670–1730), Sir John Vanbrugh (1664–1726), and George Farquhar (1678–1707).

71. '*Whose jewels,' etc.* Collins's Ode, *The Manners*, 55–6. 'Light' should be 'beams.'

In the dedication of one of his plays. *The Way of the World*, 1700.

Love for Love. 1695.

Munden's Foresight. Hazlitt, according to his usual practice, is repeating here what he did not consider he could improve upon. (*A View of the English Stage*, vol. v. p. 278.)

72. *I never valued.* *Love for Love*, Act v. Scene 12.

To divest him. *Ibid.*, Act II. Scene 7.

The short scene with Trapland. *Ibid.*, Act I. Scene 5.

More misfortunes. *Ibid.*, Act I. Scene 9.

Sisters every way. *Ibid.*, Act II. Scene 9.

Nay, if you come to that. *Ibid.*

The Old Bachelor, brought out in January, 1692–3; *The Double Dealer*, in November 1693.

Dying Ned Careless. *The Double Dealer*, Act IV. Scene 9.

'*Love's thrice repured nectar.*' *Troilus and Cressida*, III. 2. 23. Misprinted 'reputed' in first and third editions.

73. *Ah! idle creature.* *The Way of the World*, Act IV. Scene 5.

Like Phœbus. *Ibid.*, Act IV. Scene 4.

'*Come then,' etc.* Pope, *Moral Essays*, Epistle II., 17–20, from memory.

If there's delight. *The Way of the World*, Act III. Scene 12.

Beauty the lover's gift. *Ibid.*, Act II. Scene 5.

74. '*Nature's own sweet,' etc.* *Twelfth Night*, I. 5. 258

'*Wild wit, invention ever new.*' Gray, Ode *On a distant Prospect of Eton College*, 46.

'*Blazons herself.*' Cf. *Cymbeline*, IV. 2. 170.

Mrs. Abington's Millamant. Frances Abington (1737–1815) practically retired from the stage in 1790, though she re-appeared for a season as late as 1799. Hazlitt missed seeing her. See note to *A View of the English Stage*, vol. v. p. 373.

Declaim. 'Disclaim' in third edition. Hazlitt's usage appears doubtful, according to the *N.E.D.*, but perhaps it is a misprint.

He's but his half-brother. *The Way of the World*, Act I. Scene 6.

75. *The description of the ruins, etc.* *The Mourning Bride*, Act II. Scene 3. For Johnson's praise of this passage see Boswell's *Life* (ed. G. B. Hill, II. 85).

Be every day. *The Mourning Bride*, Act I. Scene 3.

76. *Bolingbroke's entry into London.* *Richard II.*, Act v. Scene 2.

Country Wife. Produced in 1672 or 1673, published in 1675, this play was partly founded on Molière's *L'École des Femmes* and *L'École des Maris.*

Agnes. In Molière's *L'École des Femmes.*

77. *Moody, as he is at present called.* In Garrick's adaptation *The Country Girl* (1766).

With him a wit. 'A wit to me is the greatest title in the world.' *The Country Wife*, Act I. Scene I.

The Plain Dealer. Produced in 1674, published in 1677. The passage in which Wycherley refers to *The Country Wife* is in Act II. Scene I.

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78. '*A discipline of humanity.*' Bacon's *Essays*, 'Of Marriage and Single Life.'
Go! You're a censorious ill woman. 'Let us begone from this censorious ill woman.' *The Plain Dealer*, Act v. Scene 1.
The Gentleman Dancing Master. Produced about 1671, published in 1673.
Love in a Wood. Produced in 1671. It was Wycherley's first play.

79. '*Had I the tediousness,*' *etc.* Cf. *Much Ado about Nothing*, III. 5. 26.
The treatment he received from Pope. See Elwin and Courthope's edition of Pope's Works, vol. v. 73–5. Wycherley's letters to Pope are printed in Appendix I. to that volume.
The Provoked Wife. Produced by Betterton and published in 1697.
The Relapse. Produced and published in 1697.

80. *The Confederacy.* Produced and published in 1705.
This last scene. The Confederacy, Act III. Scene 2.

81. '*It does somewhat smack.*' Cf. *The Merchant of Venice*, II. 2. 17.
Old Palmer. Jack Palmer (1742?–1798). Cf. Hazlitt's *London Magazine* essay, 'On Play-Going and Some of Our Old Actors.'

82. *The best company in the world. The Man of Mode*, Act IV. Scene 3.
Now for my part. The Relapse, Act v. Scene 5.
Let loose the greyhound. Ibid., Act III. Scene 3.
It's well they've got me a husband. Ibid.

83. *A devilish girl at the bottom. The Confederacy*, Act II. Scene 1.
Proud to be at the head. See *ante*, note to p. 36.
Garrick's favourite part. A portrait of Garrick as Sir John Brute, by Zoffany, is in the Garrick Club.
The drunken scene. See Act IV. Scenes 1 and 3 of *The Provoked Wife.* When the play was revived in 1725 Vanbrugh himself changed Sir John Brute's disguise and made him appear before the justice in his wife's 'short cloak and sack.'

84. '*In intellectual gladiatorship.*' Unidentified.
'*Hair-breadth 'scapes.*' *Othello*, I. 3. 136.
'*Any relish of salvation.*' Cf. *Hamlet*, III. 3. 92.

85. '*O'erstep the modesty of nature.*' *Ibid.*, III. 2. 21.
'*God Almightys gentlemen.*' Dryden, *Absalom and Achitophel*, I. 645.
He somewhere prides himself, *etc.* In the dedication of *The Inconstant.*
The Trip to the Jubilee. The Constant Couple; *or, a Trip to the Jubilee*, produced in 1700.
Mr. Burke's courtly and chivalrous observation. 'That chastity of honour . . . under which vice itself lost half its evil, by losing all its grossness.' *Reflections on the French Revolution* (ed. Payne, p. 89).

86. *Now, dear madam. Sir Harry Wildair*, Act IV. Scene 2.

88. *The dialogue between Cherry and Archer.* See *The Beaux' Stratagem* (produced 1707), Act II. Scene 3.

89. *The Recruiting Officer.* 1706.
Catastrophe of this play. See Farquhar's Dedication.
Love and a Bottle, 1699; *The Twin Rivals*, 1702.
Farquhar's Letters. Originally published in 1702 under the title of 'Love and Business.'
Dennis's Remarks, etc. Dennis's *Remarks upon Cato* appeared in 1713.
His View of the English Stage. Jeremy Collier's *Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* (1697–8).

90. '*Shews vice its own image,*' *etc.* Cf. *Hamlet*, III. 2. 25.
'*Denote a foregone conclusion.*' *Othello*, III. 3. 428.
Colley Cibber's Life, etc. Cf. 'On Actors and Acting' in *The Round Table*, vol. IV. p. 156.

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90. *Which Voltaire reckons.* In *Letters concerning the English Nation*, Letter xxiii.
91. '*Let no rude band*,' *etc.* Wordsworth, *Ellen Irwin*, St. 7.
'*Die and leave the world no copy.*' Cf. *Twelfth Night*, I. 5. 261.

V. ON THE PERIODICAL ESSAYISTS

Cf. this lecture (pp. 95-99) with *The Round Table* paper, 'On the Tatler.'

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91. '*The proper study*,' *etc.* Pope, *Essay on Man*, II. 2.
'*Comes home to the business*,' *etc.* Bacon, dedication of the *Essays*.
Quicquid agunt homines, *etc.* These words of Juvenal (*Sat.* I. 85-6) formed the motto of the first forty numbers of *The Tatler*.
'*Holds the mirror*,' *etc.* Cf. *Hamlet*, III. 2. 24.
'*The act and practic part*,' *etc.* *Henry V.*, I. I. 51.
92. '*The web of our life*,' *etc.* *All's Well that Ends Well*, IV. 3. 83.
'*Quid sit pulchrum*,' *etc.* Horace, *Epistles*, I. 2.
Montaigne. The *Essais* of Michael de Montaigne (1533-1592), were published, Books I. and II. in 1580, Book III. in 1588.
93. '*According to an exact scale.*' Cf. 'Trying them . . . upon an exact scale of Bossu's.' *Tristram Shandy*, Book III. chap. 12.
'*Not one of the angles*,' *etc.* *Ibid.*
'*Pour out all as plain*,' *etc.* Pope, *Imitations of Horace*, Sat. I. 51-2.

Note. 'What made (say Montaigne, or more sage Charron !)
Otho a warrior, Cromwell a buffoon.'
Pope, *Moral Essays*, I. 87-8.

De la Sagesse, the chief work of Montaigne's friend Pierre Charron (1541-1603), appeared in 1601.
94. '*Pereant isti*,' *etc.* Ælius Donatus, St. Jerome, *Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, Cap. I.
Charles Cotton. Cotton's translation of Montaigne was published in three volumes in 1685. John Florio's version, of course, was earlier (1603).
'*The book in the world*,' *etc.* Cotton's translation was dedicated to George Savile, Marquis of Halifax, who, in his reply, addressed to Cotton, spoke of the *Essays* as 'the book in the world I am best entertained with.'
Cowley, *etc.* Abraham Cowley's *Several Discourses by way of Essays in Prose and Verse* were appended to the collected edition of his works in 1668; Sir William Temple's (1628-1699) essays entitled *Miscellanea* were published in 1680 and 1692; Lord Shaftesbury's (1671-1713) *Moralists* in 1709, and *Characteristics* in 1711.
Note. *Nam quodcumque*, *etc.* Lucretius, II. 752-3.
95. '*The perfect spy o' th' time.*' *Macbeth*, III. I. 130.
Of all our periodical essayists. From this point to the foot of p. 99 see the notes to *The Round Table*, vol. IV. pp. 7-10. Hazlitt has added several passages.
The Tatler. The first number of the *Tatler* appeared on April 12, 1709, the last on January 2, 1711. The papers were re-issued in two forms, one in 8vo., one in 12mo., in 1710-11.
96. Note. No. 86, not No. 125, of *The Tatler*.
Mr. Lilly's shop-windows. Charles Lillie, the perfumer's at the corner of Beaufort Buildings in the Strand. See *The Tatler*, Nos. 92 and 94.
Will Estcourt or Tom Durfey. Richard Estcourt (1688-1712), actor and dramatist, and Tom D'Urfey (1653-1723), the dramatist and song-writer, are substituted for 'Mr. Penkethman and Mr. Bullock' in *The Round Table*.

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97. *The Spectator. The Spectator* ran from March 1, 1711, to December 6, 1712, and from June 18, 1714, to December 20, 1714. The collected edition appeared in 8 vols., 1712–15.

'*The whiteness of her hand.*' 'She has certainly the finest hand of any woman in the world.' *The Spectator*, No. 113.

98. '*He has a widow in his line of life.*' *The Spectator*, No. 130.

His falling asleep in church, etc. The Spectator, No. 112. John Williams should be 'one John Matthews.'

99. *Of which Mr. Fuseli has availed himself.* In *Lectures on Painting delivered at the Royal Academy.* 1820.

The Guardian. March 12, 1713, to October 1713. Of the 176 numbers Steele contributed 82, and Addison 53, papers.

Note. '*Proud submission and dignified obedience.*' *Reflections on the French Revolution* (ed. Payne, p. 89).

100. *The Rambler.* March 20, 1749–50, to March 14, 1752. As Mr. Austin Dobson points out, Hazlitt omits all mention of *The Idler.*

'*Give us pause,*' *Hamlet*, III. 1. 68.

101. '*The elephant,*' *etc. Paradise Lost*, IV. 345–7.

102. '*If he were to write,*' *etc.* Boswell's *Life of Johnson* (ed. G. B. Hill), II. 231.

'*He runs the great circle* [circuit],' *etc.* Cowper, *The Task*, IV. 119.

Abused Milton and patronised Lauder. See Boswell's *Life of Johnson* (ed. G. B. Hill), I. 228–31.

103. '*The king of good fellows,*' *etc.* Burns, *Auld Rob Morris*, 2.

'*Inventory of all he said.*' Cf. 'And ta'en an inventory of what they are.' Ben Jonson, *The Alchemist*, Act III. Scene 2.

'*The Ebro's temper.*' 'It is a sword of Spain, the Ebro's temper.' *Othello*, v. 2. 253 (Pope's text).

Goldsmith asked. Boswell's *Life of Johnson* (ed. G. B. Hill), II. 260.

He himself said. Ibid., II. 450.

When Topham Beauclerc, etc. Ibid., I. 250.

His throwing himself back in the postchaise. Ibid., II. 362.

His quitting the society, etc. Ibid., I. 201.

His dining with Wilkes. Ibid., III. 64 *et seq.*

His sitting with the young ladies. Ibid., II. 120.

His carrying the unfortunate victim, etc. Ibid., IV. 321.

104. *An act which realises the parable of the good Samaritan.* See Talfourd, *Final Memorials of Lamb*, 1848, II. 176.

'*Where they,*' *etc.* Gray's *Elegy*, The Epitaph.

The Adventurer. Nov. 7, 1752, to March 9, 1754. John Hawkesworth (1715–1773) was the chief contributor.

The World. Jan. 4, 1753, to Dec. 30, 1756.

The Connoisseur. Jan. 31, 1754, to Sept. 30, 1756.

One good idea, etc. Hazlitt refers to a paper by Edward Moore which appeared in *The World* (No. 176), not, as he says, in *The Connoisseur.*

Citizen of the World. Republished (from the *Public Ledger* and elsewhere) in 2 vols., 1762.

'*Go about to cozen,*' *etc.* Cf. *Merchant of Venice*, II. 9. 38.

The Persian Letters. Lord Lyttelton's *Letters from a Persian in England to his friend at Ispahan*, 1735.

'*The bonzes,*' *etc. The Citizen of the World*, Letter X.

105. '*Edinburgh. We are positive,*' *etc. Ibid.*, Letter V.

Beau Tibbs. Ibid., Letters XXIX., LIV., LV., and LXXI.

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105. *The Lounger and The Mirror. The Mirror* appeared in Edinburgh from Jan. 23, 1779, to May 27, 1780; *The Lounger* from Feb. 5, 1785, to Jan. 6, 1786. Henry Mackenzie was the chief contributor to both.

La Roche. The Mirror, Nos. 42, 43, and 44.

Le Fevre. Tristram Shandy, Book VI. Chap. 6 *et seq.*

The Man of the World. By Henry Mackenzie (1745–1831), published in 1773.

Julia de Roubigné. Published in 1777.

Rosamond Gray. Lamb's *Rosamund Gray* was published in 1798, and shewed the influence of Mackenzie's story.

The Man of Feeling. Published in 1771.

The lone figure of Miss Walton. Cf. the *Plain Speaker* essay, 'On Reading Old Books' (1821): 'I have a sneaking kindness for Mackenzie's Julia de Roubigné—for the deserted mansion, and straggling gilliflowers on the mouldering garden-wall; and still more for his Man of Feeling; not that it is better, nor so good; but at the time I read it, I sometimes thought of the heroine, Miss Walton, and of Miss —— together, and "that ligament, fine as it was, was never broken!"' We have here an allusion to one of Hazlitt's early romances, the heroine of which, however (Miss Railton?), is shadowy.

VI. ON THE ENGLISH NOVELISTS

Cf. this Lecture (pp. 106–25) with Hazlitt's *Edinburgh Review* article for February 1815, on 'Standard Novels and Romances.'

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106. '*Be mine to read,' etc.* To Richard West, April 1742 (*Letters*, ed. Tovey, I. 97).

'*Something more divine in it.*' Bacon, *Advancement of Learning.* See vol. V. note to p. 3.

107. *Fielding in speaking, etc. Joseph Andrews, Book* III. Chap. I.

The description . . . given by Mr. Burke. Reflections on the French Revolution (ed. Payne, pp. 92–3).

Echard 'On the Contempt of the Clergy.' John Eachard's (1636?–1697) *The Grounds and Occasions of the Contempt of the Clergy and Religion enquired into*, published in 1670 and frequently reprinted.

'*Worthy of all acceptation.*' 1 *Timothy*, I. 15.

The lecture which Lady Booby reads, etc. Joseph Andrews, Book IV. chap. 3.

Blackstone or De Lolme. Sir William Blackstone's (1723–1780) *Commentaries on the Laws of England* appeared in 1765–9, John Louis De Lolme's (1740?–1807) *The Constitution of England*, in French 1771, in English 1775.

108. *What I have said upon it, etc. I.e.*, in *The Edinburgh Review.* See note at head.

Don Quixote. Part I., 1605; Part II., 1615.

'*The long-forgotten order of chivalry.*' 'The long-neglected and almost extinguished order of knight-errantry.' *Don Quixote* (trans. Jarvis), Part I., Book IV. chap. 28.

'*Witch the world,' etc.* 1 *Henry IV.*, IV. I. 110.

109. '*Oh, what delicate wooden spoons,' etc. Don Quixote*, Part II., Book IV. chap. 67.

The curate confidentially informing Don Quixote, etc. Ibid.

Our adventurer afterwards, etc. Ibid.

110. '*Still prompts,' etc.* Pope, *Essay on Man*, IV. 3–4. 'Wish' should be 'bear.'

'*Singing the ancient ballad of Roncesvalles.*' *Don Quixote*, Part II., Book I. chap. 9.

Marcella. Ibid., Part I., Book I. chaps. 12 and 13.

I have never read. This conclusion of the paragraph is added to the *Edinburgh Review* text. To our knowledge, he did not achieve the hope expressed in it.

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110. *His Galatea, etc.* *Galatea*, 1585; *Persiles and Sigismunda*, 1616.

111. *Gusman D'Alfarache.* By Mateo Aleman, published in 1599.

Lazarillo de Tormes. Attributed to Diego Hurtado de Mendoza (1503–1575), published in 1553. This passage, to the end of the paragraph, is added to the *Edinburgh Review* text.

Gil Blas. The *Histoire de Gil Blas de Santillane* of Alain-René le Sage (1668–1747) appeared in 4 vols., 1715–1735.

112. *It has been usual.* Not unreasonably, in the case of Fielding, as Mr. Austin Dobson remarks; since the full title of his first novel was *The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews, and his friend Mr. Abraham Adams: Written in Imitation of the Manner of Cervantes.*

Smollett is more like Gil Blas. In the Preface to *Roderick Random* he admitted his obligation to Le Sage.

113. *Tom Jones.* Published in 1749.

114. '*I was never so handsome,' etc.* *Tom Jones*, Book XVII. chap. 4.

Amelia and Joseph Andrews. Published in 1751 and 1742 respectively.

115. *Roderick Random.* Published in 1748, when Smollett was twenty-seven; *Tom Jones* was published in 1749, when Fielding was forty-two.

116. '*The stuff' of which it is composed.* Cf. *The Tempest*, IV. I. 156.

Intus et in cute. Persius, *Satires*, III. 30.

117. *Peregrine Pickle . . . and Launcelot Greaves.* 1751 and 1762 respectively.

Humphrey Clinker and Count Fathom. 1771 and 1753 respectively.

Richardson. The three novels of Samuel Richardson (1689–1761) appeared as follows: *Pamela* in 1740; *Clarissa Harlowe* in 1747–8; *Sir Charles Grandison* in 1753.

118. *Originally written in eight and twenty volumes.* Cf. Mrs. Barbauld's *Life*, 1804. cxlii.

119. *Dr. Johnson . . . when he said.* Boswell's *Life of Johnson* (ed. G. B. Hill), II. 174.

120. '*Books are a real world,' etc.* Wordsworth, *Personal Talk*, stanza 3, from memory.

Sterne. Laurence Sterne's (1713–1768) *Tristram Shandy* appeared in 9 vols. 1759–1767, and *A Sentimental Journey* in 2 vols. in 1768.

121. *Goldsmith . . . should call him.* Boswell's *Life of Johnson* (ed. G. B. Hill), II. 222.

123. '*Have kept the even tenor of their way.*' Gray's *Elegy*, 76.

Evelina, Cecilia, and Camilla. By Frances Burney, Madame D'Arblay (1752–1840), published respectively in 1778, 1782, and 1796.

Mrs. Radcliffe. Ann Radcliffe (1764–1822), author of *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), etc.

'*Enchantments drear.*' *Il Penseroso*, 119.

Mrs. Inchbald. Elizabeth Inchbald (1753–1821), novelist, dramatist, and actress. Her *Nature and Art* appeared in 1796, *A Simple Story* in 1791.

Miss Edgeworth. Maria Edgeworth (1767–1849). *Castle Rackrent* appeared in 1800.

Meadows. In *The Wanderer.*

Note. *The Fool of Quality*, by Henry Brooke (1766); *David Simple*, by Sarah Fielding (1744); and *Sidney Biddulph*, by Mrs. Sheridan (1761).

Note. *I have attempted a character elsewhere.* In *Lectures on the English Poets*, vol. V. p. 119.

124. *It has been said of Shakspeare, etc.* By Pope. See *Characters of Shakespear's Plays*, vol. IV. p. 171 and note.

'*There is nothing so true as habit.*' Windham, Speech on the Conduct of the Duke of York, March 14, 1809. *Speeches*, III. 205.

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125. '*Stand so* [not] *upon the order*,' *etc.* *Macbeth*, III. 4. 119.
The green silken threads. *Don Quixote*, Part II. IV. Chap. 58.
The Wanderer. 1814.
'*The gossamer*,' *etc.* *Romeo and Juliet*, II. 6. 18.

127. *The Castle of Otranto.* By Horace Walpole (1764).
Quod sic mihi, etc. Cf. Horace, *Ars Poetica*, 188.
The Recess, by Sophia Lee (1785); *The Old English Baron*, by Clara Reeve, originally published in 1777 under the title of 'The Champion of Virtue, a Gothic Story.'
'*Dismal treatises.*' *Macbeth*, v. 5. 12.
The Monk, by Matthew Gregory Lewis, published in 1795 as 'Ambrosio, or the Monk.'
'*All the luxury of woe.*' Cf. 'I'll taste the luxury of woe,' Moore, *Juvenile Poems*, stanzas headed 'Anacreontic.'

128. '*His chamber*,' *etc.* *The Faerie Queene*, II. IX. 50, line 5 omitted.

129. '*Familiar in our mouths*,' *etc.* *Henry V.*, IV. 3. 52.

130. *Whoever else is, it is pretty clear.* Scott's authorship was avowed at the dinner of the Theatrical Fund in Edinburgh, February 23, 1827. It was, of course, an open secret long before. Cf. a passage in Hazlitt's next course of lectures (*ante*, p. 320) for what appears to be his own earliest reference to Scott's authorship.
The author of Caleb Williams. William Godwin (1756–1836). *Caleb Williams* appeared in 1794, *St. Leon* in 1799, *Mandeville* in 1817.
'*Action is momentary*,' *etc.* Wordsworth, *The Borderers.* See note to 'Mr. Wordsworth' in *The Spirit of the Age.*

132. *Political Justice.* *An Inquiry concerning Political Justice and its Influence on Morals and Happiness*, 1793.
'*Where his treasure*,' *etc.* *St. Matthew*, vi. 21.

VII. ON THE WORKS OF HOGARTH—ON THE GRAND AND FAMILIAR STYLE OF PAINTING

Cf. this lecture (pp. 133–38) with *The Round Table* paper, 'On Hogarth's Marriage a-la-mode.'

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133. *Hogarth.* William Hogarth (1697–1764).
'*Instinct in every part.*' Cf. 'Instinct through all proportions low and high.' *Paradise Lost*, XI. 562.
'*Other pictures we see, Hogarth's we read.*' 'Other pictures we look at,—his prints we read.' Lamb's *Essay on the Genius and Character of Hogarth*, referred to *ante*, p. 138.
The public had not long ago. From this point to half-way down p. 138 see the notes to *The Round Table*, vol. IV. pp. 25–31.

139. *The highest authority on art in this country.* Sir George Howland Beaumont (1753–1827), connoisseur and art patron, is probably intended.
Mr. Wilkie. David Wilkie (1785–1841), Royal Academician 1811, knighted 1836.
Teniers. David Teniers, the younger (1610–1690).
'*To shew vice*,' *etc.* Cf. *Hamlet*, III. 2. 27.

140. '*The very error of the time.*' Cf. 'The very error of the moon,' *Othello*, v. 2. 109.
'*Your lungs*,' *etc.* Cf. *As You Like It*, II. 7. 30.

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140. *Bagnigge Wells.* Sadler's Wells. Hazlitt refers to Hogarth's 'Evening,' one of the four 'Times of Day.'

142. *Parson Ford.* Johnson's cousin, Cornelius Ford. See Boswell's *Life of Johnson* (ed. G. B. Hill), I. 49.

'*Like leaves in October.*' Cf.

> 'And he that will to bed go sober,
> Falls with the leaf still in October.'

Beaumont and Fletcher, *The Bloody Brother*, Drinking Song, Act II. Scene 2.

143. '*Die of a rose,' etc.* Pope, *Essay on Man*, I, 200.

In the manner of Ackerman's dresses for May. This phrase is Moore's, *Horace, Ode XI., Lib. 2. Freely translated by the Pr—ce R—g—t.*

144. '*The Charming Betsy Careless.*' See the last of the series of 'The Rake's Progress,' the scene in Bedlam. One of the lunatics has scratched the name on the bannisters.

'*Stray-gifts of love and beauty.*' Cf.

> '. . . Pleasure is spread through the earth
> In stray gifts to be claimed by whoever shall find.'
>
> Wordsworth, *Stray Pleasures.*

'*The handwriting on the wall.*' *Daniel*, v. 5.

145. *Insisted on by Sir Joshua Reynolds.* See *Table-Talk*, vol. VIII. p. 131 *et seq.*

146. '*Conformed to this world,' etc.* *Romans*, xii. 2.

'*Give to airy nothing,' etc.* *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, v. I. 16.

'*Ignorant present.*' *Macbeth*, I. 5. 58.

Note. '*Nay, nay,' etc.* 'Na, na! not that way, not that way, the head to the east.' *Guy Mannering*, chap. 55.

147. *The Gate Beautiful . . . the Miraculous Draught of Fishes.* See 'The Pictures at Hampton Court' in *Sketches of the Principal Picture Galleries* (vol. x.).

148. *It is many years since.* See the *Table-Talk* essay 'On Going a Journey,' vol. VIII. p. 185.

'*How was I then uplifted.*' *Troilus and Cressida*, III. 2. 175.

'*Temples not made with hands,' etc.* 2 *Corinthians*, v. 1.

In the Louvre. See the *Table-Talk* essay, 'On the Pleasure of Painting' and *The Life of Napoleon* (vol. XIII. p. 212).

'*All eyes shall see me,' etc.* Cf. *Romans*, xiv. 11.

149. *There 'stood the statue,' etc.* 'So stands the statue that enchants the world.' Thomson, *The Seasons*, Summer, 1347.

'*There was old Proteus,' etc.* Wordsworth's Sonnet, 'The world is too much with us,' adapted.

The stay, the guide, etc. Unacknowledged from Wordsworth's *Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey*, 109–110.

'*Smoothed the raven down,' etc.* *Comus*, 251.

VIII. ON THE COMIC WRITERS OF THE LAST CENTURY

Cf. this lecture (pp. 149–54) with *The Round Table* paper, 'On Modern Comedy.'

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149. *The question which has been often asked.* From this point to the foot of p. 151 see the notes to *The Round Table*, vol. IV. pp. 10–12.

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151. '*Seen a long way off upon a level.*' The quotation marks do not appear in *The Round Table* or in *The Morning Chronicle*. Cf., however,

> '. . . Seen
> In distant view, along the level green.'
>
> Collins, *Persian Eclogues*, III.

152. *The authority of Sterne, etc.* See *Tristram Shandy*, Book I. chap. 21.

 l. 22. In the third edition a passage is interpolated from Hazlitt's letter to *The Morning Chronicle*, Oct. 15, 1813. See the later volume devoted to his journalism.

 '*The ring*,' *etc.* Pope, *Moral Essays*, III. 309–10.

 Angelica, etc. All these characters are in Congreve's *Love for Love*.

 The compliments which Pope paid to his friends. Cf. the essay 'On Persons one would wish to have seen.'

153. '*Preferable regards.*' Cf. *Clarissa*, Letter IX.

 The loves of the plants and the triangles. Erasmus Darwin's poem 'The Loves of the Plants' (1789) was the subject of Canning's famous parody 'The Loves of the Triangles' in *The Anti-Jacobin*.

 Berinthias and Alitheas. Berinthia in Vanbrugh's *The Relapse*; Alithea in Wycherley's *The Country Wife*.

 Beppo, etc. Lord Byron's *Beppo* (1818), Campbell's *Gertrude of Wyoming* (1809), Scott's *Lady of the Lake* (1810). Madame De Staël's *Corinne* appeared in 1807.

 For this reason I conceive, etc. See notes to *The Round Tcble*, vol. IV. pp. 12–13.

 l. 17. In the third edition a further passage from Hazlitt's letter to *The Morning Chronicle* (see note above to previous page) is inserted.

154. '*Almost afraid to know itself.*' *Macbeth*, IV. 3. 165.

 Mr. Farren. William Farren (1786–1861). Lord Ogleby in Colman and Garrick's *The Clandestine Marriage* was one of his best parts.

 I have observed in a former lecture. Lecture IV., *ante*, p. 70.

 Note. See vol. IV. p. 313.

155. *Jeremy Collier.* Jeremy Collier's (1650–1726) *Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* appeared in March 1697–8.

 Mrs. Centlivre. Susannah Centlivre (1667?–1723). *The Busy Body* appeared in 1709, *The Wonder* in 1714.

156. *The scene near the end. The Wonder*, Act V. Scene 2.

 '*Roast me these Violantes.*' *Ibid.*, Act II. Scene I.

 In the third edition Hazlitt's account of *The Busy Body*, from Oxberry's *New English Drama*, is inserted. See vol. IX. of the present edition.

157. '*The one cries Mum*,' *etc.* Cf. *Merry Wives of Windsor*, V. 2. 6.

 '*By the politeness of his style*,' *etc.* 'When the incomparable Mr. Steele in the usual elegance of his easy Style, dwells on the Praises of his sublime Species, and with all the Embellishments of Rhetorick, sets forth the Excellency of Human Nature, it is impossible not to be charm'd with his happy Turns of Thought, and the Politeness of his Expressions.' *Fable of the Bees*, 1714, pp. 35–6.

158. '*Some soul of goodness*,' *etc.* *Henry V.*, IV. I. 4.

 His Funeral. Produced in 1701.

 '*All the milk of human kindness.*' Cf. *Macbeth*, I. 5. 18.

 The Conscious Lovers. 1722. Hazlitt refers to Act III. Scene I.

 Parson Adams against me. See *Joseph Andrews*, Book III. chap. 11.

 Addison's Drummer. 1715.

 '*An Hour after Marriage*,' *Three Hours after Marriage* (1717), the joint production of Gay, Pope, and Arbuthnot.

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158. '*An alligator stuff'd.*' *Romeo and Juliet*, v. i. 43.
'*Odious endeavours.*' Congreve, *Way of the World*, Act iv. Scene i.
Gay's What-d'ye-call-it. 1715.
'*Polly.*' Published in 1728. The representation was forbidden by the Court.
Last line but one. In the third edition Hazlitt's essay 'On the Beggar's Opera' (see vol. iv. pp. 65-6) is here introduced.

159. *The Mock Doctor.* 1732.
Tom Thumb. Afterwards called *The Tragedy of Tragedies, or the Life and Death of Tom Thumb the Great* (1730; additional Act, 1731).
Lord Grizzle. In *Tom Thumb.*
What a name and what a person. Hazlitt is drawing for the rest of the paragraph on his *Times* critique, Sept. 25, 1817. See the later volume devoted to his journalism.
It has been said. See notes to the *Times* critique above mentioned.
'*Like those hanging locks,*' *etc.* Fletcher, *The Faithful Shepherdess*, Act i. Scene 2.
'*Que terribles sont ses cheveux gris!*' Cf. notes to *Times* critique as above.
'*Fell of hair,*' *etc.* *Macbeth*, v. 5. 11.
'*Hey for Doctor's Commons.*' *Tragedy of Tragedies, etc.*, Act ii. Scene 5.
'*From the sublime,*' *etc.* See *ante*, note to p. 23.
Lubin Log. In James Kenney's farce, *Love, Law, and Physic*, produced 1812.
The Widow's Choice. Allingham's *Who Wins, or The Widow's Choice*, 1808.
'*Is high fantastical.*' *Twelfth Night*, i. i. 15.

160. '*Must bid a gay defiance to mischance.*' Unidentified.
The hero of the Dunciad. Cibber was substituted for Theobald as the King of Dulness in consequence of his famous letter to Pope, published in 1742.
'*By merit raised,*' *etc.* *Paradise Lost*, ii. 5-6.
His Apology for his own Life. Published in 1740. Cf. *The Round Table*, vol. iv. pp. 156-7.
His account of his waiting, etc. *An Apology, etc.*, 2nd ed. 1740, chap. iii. pp. 59-60.
Mr. Burke's celebrated apostrophe. *Reflections on the French Revolution* (ed. Payne, p. 89).
Kynaston, etc. See vol. i. notes to pp. 156-7.

161. *His Careless Husband.* 1704.
His Double Gallant. 1707. The play was revived in 1817 and noticed by Hazlitt, who is here, and on the next page, making use of a few sentences from his *Examiner* critique. See vol. v. pp. 359-362.
'*In hidden mazes,*' *etc.* Cf. *L'Allegro*, 141-2.

162. *His Nonjuror.* 1717. Isaac Bickerstaff's *The Hypocrite* was produced in 1768.
Love's Last Shift. Colley Cibber's first play, produced in 1694. For Southerne's remark to Cibber, see *An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber*, p. 173.
l. 34. In the third edition Hazlitt's account of *The Hypocrite*, from Oxberry's *New English Drama*, is inserted. See vol. ix. of the present edition.
Love in a Riddle. 1729.
'*Of a nice morality.*' Unidentified.

163. *The Suspicious Husband*, 1747, *The Jealous Wife*, 1761, *The Clandestine Marriage*, 1766.
l. 15. In the third edition Hazlitt's account of *The Jealous Wife*, from Oxberry's *New English Drama*, is inserted. See vol. ix. of the present edition.
The elder Colman's translation of Terence. Published in 1765.
Bickerstaff's plays. *Love in a Village*, 1763, *The Maid of the Mill*, 1765, and *The Hypocrite* are the best known.

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163. *Mrs. Cowley's comedy.* Hannah Cowley's (1743?–1809) *The Belle's Stratagem* appeared in 1780, *Who's the Dupe?* in 1779.

164. *Goldsmith's Good-natured Man*, 1768; *She Stoops to Conquer*, 1773.

In the third edition Hazlitt's account of *She Stoops to Conquer*, from Oxberry's *New English Drama*, is inserted. See vol. IX. of the present edition.

Murphy's plays. Arthur Murphy's (1730–1805) *All in the Wrong*, 1761, and *Know Your Own Mind*, 1778.

Both his principal pieces, etc. There seems to be some inaccuracy here. Colman's *Jealous Wife* was produced in February 1761, Murphy's *All in the Wrong* in June of the same year. *The School for Scandal*, however, appeared a month later than Murphy's *Know Your Own Mind*, viz., in May 1777.

'*Shines like Hesperus,' etc.*

> '. . . Exceeding shone
> Like Hesperus amongst the lesser lights.'
>
> *The Faerie Queene*, I. vii. 30.

The School for Scandal, 1777, *The Rivals*, 1775, *The Duenna*, 1775, and *The Critic*, 1779.

Cumberland. Richard Cumberland (1732–1811), the dramatist, whose *West Indian* (1771) and *The Wheel of Fortune* (1795) are referred to below, p. 166.

'*Dragged the struggling monster,' etc.* Goldsmith, *The Traveller*, 190.

165. *Miss Farren.* Elizabeth Farren (1759–1829). See *A View of the English Stage*, vol. V. p. 291 and note.

Matthew Bramble and his sister. In *Humphry Clinker.*

'*He had damnable iteration in him.*' 1 *Henry IV.*, I. 2. 101.

l. 36. In the third edition Hazlitt's account of *The Rivals*, from Oxberry's *New English Drama*, is inserted. See vol. IX. of the present edition.

'*Had I a heart,' etc.* *The Duenna*, Act I. Scene 5.

166. '*Half thy malice,' etc.* *Ibid.*, Act III. Scene 1.

That on the Begum's affairs. June 3, 6, 10, 13, 1788.

One who has all the ability, etc. Thomas Moore, whose *Life of Sheridan*, however, did not appear till 1825, when Hazlitt did not write so cordially of it or its author. (Cf. 'On the Want of Money.') Moore, at Sloperton, enters in his *Journal* under date January 19, 1819: 'Hazlitt's lecture on Sheridan (quoted in the Chronicle of this morning, and containing a warm eulogium on me) led us to talk of humour, Rabelais, etc.'

Macklin's Man of the World. Charles Macklin's (1697?–1797) *The Man of the World*, first produced in London in 1781.

Cooke's acting. George Frederick Cooke (1756–1811).

Mr. Holcroft's Road to Ruin. See *Memoirs of Thomas Holcroft*, vol. III. pp. 121–4 of the present edition, and the introduction to this play, contributed by Hazlitt to Oxberry's *New English Drama* (vol. IX.).

l. 38. In the third edition Hazlitt's account of *The West Indian*, from Oxberry's *New English Drama*, is inserted. See vol. IX. of the present edition.

The Mayor of Garratt. Samuel Foote's (1720–1777), produced in 1764. John O'Keeffe's (1747–1833) *The Agreeable Surprise*, 1781.

167. *Mother Cole, etc.* Mrs. Cole and Smirk are both in *The Minor* (1760). Hazlitt was no doubt thinking of Puff in *Taste* (1752).

'*Pleasant, though wrong.*' Unidentified.

The acting of Dowton and Russell. Cf. *A View of the English Stage*, vol. V. pp. 317–18.

'*Pigeon-livered,' etc.* *Hamlet*, II. 2. 605.

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168. *Peter Pindar.* John Wolcot (1738–1819). *Sir Joseph Banks and the Emperor of Morocco* was published in 1788. The first of his *Lyric Odes to the Royal Academicians* appeared in 1782, and his *Ode upon Ode, or a Peep at St. James's and Instructions to a celebrated Laureat, being a Comic Account of the Visit of the Sovereign to Whitbread's Brewery*, in 1787.

'*Those flashes of his spirit*,' *etc.* Cf. *Hamlet*, v. 1. 209.

Like his own expiring taper. 'To My Candle.' See Hazlitt's *Atlas* paper, 'Peter Pindar,' in the later volume devoted to his journalism.

LECTURES ON THE AGE OF ELIZABETH

HAZLITT's fourth (and last) course of public lectures was delivered at the Surrey Institution, Great Surrey Street, during November and December 1819. They were composed, like the previous course, at Winterslow. Procter says: 'When he was about to write his *Lectures on the Age of Elizabeth*, he knew little or nothing of the dramatists of that time, with the exception of Shakespeare. He spoke to Charles Lamb, and to myself, who were supposed by many to be well acquainted with these ancient writers. I lent him about a dozen volumes, comprehending the finest of the old plays; and he then went down to Winterslow Hut, in Wiltshire, and after a stay of six weeks came back to London, fully impregnated with the subject, with his thoughts fully made up upon it, and with all his lectures written.' (*Autobiographical Fragment*, 1877, p. 173.) This account appears to overlook that Hazlitt had already dealt with Ben Jonson, and to some extent with Beaumont and Fletcher, in the *Comic Writers;* but it is in essence no doubt accurate. That he had already planned the course substantially as he wrote it we learn from the following letter to P. G. Patmore, secretary of the Surrey Institution, which I print from the original by kind permission of Lord Crewe:

'Wednesday [P. M. 4 Feb., 1819]
19 York Street,
Westminster

'DEAR SIR,

I conceive the Course of Lectures which I had it in contemplation to propose through you to the Committee for next year on the Age & Literature of Q. Elizabeth would fall nearly into the following divisions.

'1. On the effects of the Reformation on intellect & moral energy.—Effects of the Translation of the Bible—of the Classics—Progress of letters throughout Europe—Voyages & Travels to the New World—Consequences of the Insular situation of England.

'2. On the general state of English manners at this period.

'3. Dramatic Writers compared with Shakespear. 1st. Beaumont & Fletcher; & Massinger.

'4. The same general subject. Ford, Webster, Marlow, &c., &c. Puritanism of the following age. Otway. Imitations of the French. Decline of English Tragedy.

'5. On the comedy before & after this period. Mother Bumby, &c.

'6. On the poetry (properly so called) of Queen Elizabeth's reign.

'7. On the prose-writers, Sir Philip Sidney, Hooker, &c. Character of Lord Bacon's Works compared as to style with Sir Thos. Brown & Jeremy Taylor.

'8 & last. The German Drama & its connection with modern philosophical paradoxes contrasted with the Drama of Shakespear's time.

'If the foregoing sketch should be approved of, I shall be happy to set to work upon the Lectures almost immediately. I suppose you have heard of my positive success at Edinburgh, & of my *negative success* in the Quarterly.

'I remain, Dear Sir, your much obliged & very
humble servant,
W. HAZLITT.

'G. P. Patmore, Esq. [*sic*]
Clapham.'

His 'positive success at Edinburgh' was the announcement (in *The Scotsman* of January 30) of the settlement out of court, with payment of damages, of his libel action against *Blackwood's Magazine* (see *A Reply to Z.*); his 'negative success in the Quarterly' the review in that journal of *Lectures on the English Poets* which, appearing at this moment, led him to pen *A Letter to Gifford.*

I. GENERAL VIEW OF THE SUBJECT

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170. Biblio. Note. '*Not rough and barren,' etc.* Warton, 'Sonnet written in a blank leaf of Dugdale's Monasticon.'

175. *Coke.* Sir Edward Coke (1552–1634), the jurist.

176. '*Mere oblivion.*' *As You Like It*, II. 7. 165
'*Poor, poor dumb names* [mouths].' *Julius Caesar*, III. 2. 229
Webster. John Webster (?d. 1625).
Deckar. Thomas Dekker (*c.* 1570–*c.* 1637).
Marston. John Marston (? 1575–1634).
Marlow. Christopher Marlowe (1564–1593).
Chapman. George Chapman (?1559–1634).
Heywood. Thomas Heywood (*c.* 1575–*c.* 1641).
Middleton. Thomas Middleton (*c.* 1570–1627).
Jonson. Ben Jonson (1572/3–1637).
Beaumont. Francis Beaumont (1584–1616).
Fletcher. John Fletcher (1579–1625).
Rowley. William Rowley (*c.* 1585–*c.* 1642) is chiefly remembered as a collaborator with the better-known Elizabethan Dramatists.
'*How lov'd, how honour'd once,' etc.* Pope's *Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady*, 71.
We are only now recovering the scattered fragments. In which work, of course, Lamb's *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets who lived about the time of Shakspeare* (1808) was a pioneer. It was never far from Hazlitt's mind (or hand) in the present course of lectures.
'*Draw the curtain,' etc.* Cf. *Twelfth Night*, I. 5. 251.
'*Of poring pedantry.*' 'Of painful pedantry the poring child.' Warton's 'Sonnet' as above.

177. '*The sacred influence of light.*' *Paradise Lost*, II. 1034.
'*Pomp of elder days.*' Warton's 'Sonnet,' as above.
'*Nor can we think what thoughts,' etc.* Dryden, *The Hind and the Panther*, I. 315.

178. '*Think . . . there's livers out of Britain.*' *Cymbeline*, III. 4. 143.
'*By nature's own sweet and cunning hand.*' Cf. *Twelfth Night*, I. 5. 258.
'*Where Pan,' etc.* Cf. *Paradise Lost*, IV. 266.
'*There are more things between heaven and earth,' etc.* Cf. *Hamlet*, I. 5. 166.

179. '*Matchless, divine, what we will.*' Pope, *Imitations of Horace*. Epis. I., Book II. 70.

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180. '*Less than smallest dwarfs.*' *Paradise Lost*, I. 779.
'*Desiring this man's art.*' Shakespeare, *Sonnet* XXIV.
'*In shape and gesture proudly eminent.*' *Paradise Lost*, I. 590.
'*His soul was like a star,' etc.* Wordsworth's sonnet 'London, 1802.'

181. '*Drew after him,' etc.* *Paradise Lost*, II. 692.
Otway . . . Venice Preserved. Thomas Otway's (1651–85) play was published in 1682.
Jonson's learned sock. Milton's *L'Allegro.*

182. *Her island voice.* Cf. vol. XIII. p. 47.

183. '*To run and read.*' *Habakkuk*, ii. 2.
'*Penetrable stuff.*' *Hamlet*, III. 4. 36.
'*My peace I give unto you,' etc.* Cf. *S. John*, xiv. 27.
'*They should love one another.*' *Ibid.*, xv. 12.

184. '*Woman, behold thy son.*' *Ibid.*, XIX. 26–7.
'*When the meek Saviour,' etc.*
'*To the Jews,' etc.* 1 *Corinthians*, I. 23.
'*We perceive a softness coming over the heart,' etc.* Cf. vol. XIV. p. 121 and note.

185. '*Soft as sinews of the new-born babe.*' *Hamlet*, III. 3. 71.
'*The best of men,' etc.* Dekker, *The Honest Whore.* Part I. Act V. Scene 2.

186. *Tasso by Fairfax.* Edward Fairfax's translation of *Jerusalem Delivered* was published in 1600.
Ariosto by Harrington. Sir John Harington's translation of *Orlando Furioso* was published in 1591.
Homer and Hesiod by Chapman. A part of George Chapman's translation of Homer's *Iliad and Odyssey* appeared in 1598 and the rest at various dates to 1615; *Hesiod* in 1618.
Virgil long before. Possibly Gawin Douglas's version of the *Æneid* (1512–53) is in mind.
Ovid soon after. (?) Arthur Golding's *Ovid* (1565–75).
North's translation of Plutarch. In 1579, by Sir Thomas North.
Catiline and Sejanus Acted in 1611 and 1603 respectively.
The satirist Aretine. Pietro Aretino (1492–1557), the 'Scourge of Princes.'
Machiavel. The Arte of Warre and *The Florentine Historie* appeared in English in 1560 and 1594 respectively.
Castiglione. Count Baldasare Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano*, a Manual for Courtiers, was translated in 1561 by Sir Thomas Hoby.
Ronsard. Pierre de Ronsard (1524–85), 'Prince of Poets.'
Du Bartas. Guillaume de Saluste Seigneur du Bartas (1544–1590), whose 'Divine Weekes and Workes' was translated in 1592.

187. '*Fortunate fields and groves,' etc.* *Paradise Lost*, III. 568–70.
Prospero's Enchanted Island. Modern editors give Eden's *History of Travayle*, 1577, as the probable source.
'*Right well I wote,' etc.* *The Faerie Queene*, Stanzas I.–III.

188. *Lear is founded upon an old ballad.* Or rather, on Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Britonum*, *c.* 1130. The ballad of *King Leir* (Percy's *Reliques*) is probably of later date than Shakespeare.
Othello on an Italian novel. The *Heccatommithi* of Giraldi Cinthio (1565).
'*Those bodiless creations,' etc.* Cf. *Hamlet*, III. 4. 138.
'*Your face, my Thane,' etc.* *Macbeth*, I. 5. 63.
Tyrrel and Forest. In *King Richard III.*

189. '*Thick and slab.*' *Macbeth*, IV. I. 32.
'*Snatched a wild and fearful joy.*' Gray's *Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College.*

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189. *The great pestilence of Florence.* In 1348.

'The course of true love never did run even [smooth]' *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, I. I. 154.

'The age of chivalry,' etc. 'The age of chivalry is gone . . . and the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever.' Burke, *Reflections on the French Revolution* (ed. Payne, p. 89).

The gentle Surrey. Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (*c.* 1517–1547) whose Songs and Sonnets are in Tottel's *Miscellany* (1557).

Sir John Suckling, 1609–42.

'Who prized black eyes,' etc. *The Session of the Poets*, Ver. 20.

'Like strength reposing,' etc. ''Tis might half slumbering on its own right arm.' Keats, *Sleep and Poetry*, 237.

190. *'They heard the tumult,' etc.* Cf. Cowper's *The Task*, IV. 99–100.

Fletcher's Noble Kinsmen. *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, 1634. Although Fletcher was certainly one of the two authors of the play, it is not known who was the other. Scenes have been attributed, with some probability, to Shakespeare.

An ingenious and agreeable writer. Nathan Drake (1766–1836), Professor Zeitlin suggests, whose *Shakespeare and his Times* was published in two volumes in 1817. See two leading articles by Leigh Hunt in *The Examiner* of Dec. 21 and 28, 1817, entitled 'Christmas and other old National Merry-makings Considered, with reference to the Nature of the Age, and to the Desirableness of their Revival.'

The Returne from Parnassus. 1606. See *ante*, p. 280.

'It snowed of meat and drink.' *Canterbury Tales*, Prologue, 345.

As Mr. Lamb observes. Cf. *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets*, note to Marston's *What you will* (*Miscellaneous Prose*, ed. Lucas, p. 52).

191. *'In act and complement extern.'* *Othello*, I. I. 63.

Description of a madhouse. In *The Honest Whore*, Part I. Act V. Scene 2.

A Mad World, my Masters. The title of one of Middleton's comedies, 1608.

'Like birdlime, brains and all.' Cf. *Othello*, II. I. 127–29.

192. *Materiam superabat opus.* Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, II. 5.

'But Pan is a God,' etc. Lyly, *Midas*, Act IV. Scene I.

II. ON LYLY, MARLOW, ETC.

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192. *The rich strond.* *The Faerie Queene*, III. IV. 20, 34.

193. *'Rich as the oozy bottom,' etc.* Cf. *King Henry V.*, I. 2. 165.

'Majestic, though in ruin.' *Paradise Lost*, II. 300.

'Shedding a faint shadow,' etc. *The Faerie Queene*, II. vii. 29.

'New-born gauds,' and *'In giving to dust,' etc.* *Troilus and Cressida*, III. 3. 176–9.

Ferrex and Porrex. By Thomas Norton (1532–1584), and Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst (1536–1608). Acted Jan. 18, 1561–2.

194. *'No figures nor no fantasies.'* *Julius Caesar*, II. I. 231.

195. *Sir Philip Sidney says.* In his *Apologie for Poetrie.*

196. *Mr. Pope . . . says.* See Spence, Letter to the Earl of Middlesex, prefixed to Dodsley's edition of *Gorboduc.*

His Muse. Thomas Sackville wrote the Induction (1563).

197. *John Lyly.* The Euphuist (*c.* 1554–1606). *Midas* (1592), *Endymion* (1591), *Alexander and Campaspe* (1584), *Mother Bombie* (1594).

198. *'Poor, unfledged,' etc.* *Cymbeline*, III. 3. 27.

'Very tolerable,' etc. Cf. *Much Ado about Nothing*, III. 3. 37.

'Grating their lean and flashy jests,' etc. Cf. *Lycidas*, 123–4.

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198. *Bobadil.* Captain Bobadil, in *Every Man in his Humour.*

199. '*The very reeds bow down.*' Act IV. Scene 2.
'*Out of my weakness,' etc. Hamlet*, II. 2. 630.
'*It is silly sooth,' etc. Twelfth Night*, II. 4. 47.

201. *Did first reduce.* Elegy to Henry Reynolds, Esquire, 91 *et seq.*
Euphues and his England. Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit, appeared in 1579 and *Euphues and his England* the year following.
Contention between Pan and Apollo. Midas, Act IV. Scene 1.
The following song. Cf. Leigh Hunt's *Indicator*, February 28, 1821: 'The following song is from an old play by Lyly. It has been reprinted in Percy's Reliques, and lately in Mr. Hazlitt's work on the Literature of the Age of Elizabeth; but it is like one of those happy things in conversation, which a friend cannot avoid repeating, if he thinks there is one hearer that does not know it. We cannot refer to what Mr. Hazlitt has said of it, his books, as we are always having reason to find when we most want them, being of that description of property which may emphatically be called borrowable; but we remember his advising us to do the very thing we are now doing with it.'

202. *Note.* Marlowe died in 1593. He was stabbed in a tavern quarrel at Deptford.
Life and Death of Doctor Faustus. Printed 1604, 1616.

203. '*Fate and metaphysical aid.' Macbeth*, I. 5. 30.
'*With uneasy steps.' Paradise Lost*, I. 295.
'*Such footing found,' etc.* Cf. *Paradise Lost*, I. 237–8.
How am I glutted. Life and death of Doctor Faustus, Scene I. 'Silk' in line 13 is misprinted 'skill' in first and second editions.

205. *What is great Mephostophilis.* Scene III.
My heart is harden'd. Scene VI.
Was this the face? Scene XVII.

206. *Oh, Faustus.* Scene XIX.
Yet, for he was a scholar. And the next quotation. Scene XX.

207. *Oh, gentlemen?* Scene XIX.
Snails! what hast got there. Cf. Scene VIII.

> 'Come, what dost thou, with that same book?
> Thou can'st not read.'

As Mr. Lamb says. 'Barabas the Jew, and Faustus the conjurer, are offsprings of a mind which at least delighted to dally with interdicted subjects.' Lamb, of Marlowe, in *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets* (*Miscellaneous Prose*, ed. Lucas, p. 50).
Lust's Dominion. Published 1657. The view now seems to be that Dekker had a hand in it: in the form in which we have it it cannot be Marlowe's.
'*Pue-fellow.' Richard III*, IV. 4. 58.
The argument of Schlegel. Cf. *Characters of Shakespear's Plays*, vol. IV. pp. 353–54.

208. *What, do none rise?* Act V. Scene I.
'*Marlowe's mighty line.*' The phrase is Ben Jonson's, in his lines prefixed to the First Folio of Shakespeare, 1623.
I know he is not dead. Lust's Dominion, Act I. Scene 3.
Hang both your greedy ears, and the next quotation. *Ibid.* Act II. Scene 2.
Tyrants swim safest. Act V. Scene 3.

209. *Oh! I grow dull.* Act III. Scene 2.
And none of you. King John, V. 7. 36–7.
Now by the proud complexion. Lust's Dominion, Act III. Scene 4.
But I that am. Antony and Cleopatra, I. 5. 28.

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209. *These dignities.* *Lust's Dominion*, Act v. Scene 5.
Now tragedy. Act v. Scene 6.
Spaniard or Moor. Act v. Scene 1.
And hang a calve's [calf's] skin. *King John*, III. 1. 129.
The rich Jew of Malta. *The Jew of Malta*, acted 1588.
Note. *This expression seems to be ridiculed.* Not the one indicated, apparently; but perhaps Falstaff's usage of the expression 'Minions of the moon' (1 *King Henry IV*, I. 2. 30) is intended to be alluded to.

210. *The relation.* Act II. Scene 3.
As the morning lark. Act II. Scene 1.
In spite of these swine-eating Christians. Act II. Scene 3.
One of Shylock's speeches. *Merchant of Venice*, Act I. Scene 3.

211. *Edward II.* 1594.
Weep'st thou already? Act v. Scene 5.
The King and Gaveston. Cf. Act I. Scene 1.
The lion and the forest deer. Act v. Scene 1.
The Song. See *ante*, p. 298.

212. *A Woman killed with Kindness.* 1603.
Oh, speak no more. Act II. Scene 3.
Cold drops of sweat. Act III. Scene 2.
Astonishment. Act IV. Scene 4.

213. '*Invisible, or dimly seen.*' *Paradise Lost*, v. 157.
Fair, and of all beloved. Act II. Scene 3.
The affecting remonstrance. Act v. Scene 5.
The Stranger. Benjamin Thompson's (1776?–1816) translation of Kotzebue's (1761–1819) *Menschenhass und Reue.*
Sir Giles Over-reach. In Massinger's *A New Way to Pay Old Debts.*

214. *This is no world in which to pity men.* *A Woman killed with Kindness*, Act III. Scene 3.
His own account. See his address 'To the Reader' in *The English Traveller*, printed 1633, and quoted in Lamb's *Specimens.*
The Royal King and Loyal Subject. 1637.
A Challenge for Beauty. 1636.
Shipwreck by Drink. Act II. Scene 1. Cf. Lamb's *Specimens.*
'*The more potent spirit.*' Cf. *Macbeth*, IV. 1. 76, and *post*, note p. 294.
Fair Quarrel. 1617.
A Woman never Vexed. 1632.
Women beware Women. 1657.

215. '*A foot, an hand, an eye,*' etc.

> 'And a hand, or eye
> By *Hilliard* drawne, is worth an history.'
>
> Donne, *The Storme*, 3-4.

She holds the mother in suspense. Act II. Scene 2.
Did not the Duke look up? Act I. Scene 3.

216. *How near am I.* Act III. Scene 1.

218. *The use that Shakespear has made.* Cf. *Characters of Shakespear's Plays*, vol. IV. p. 194 and note.
The moon's a gallant. Act III. Scene 3.

220. *The original of that in Macbeth.* See note p. 218 above.
What death is 't you desire? Act v. Scene 2.

223. *Cannot consist with mirth.* A misprint, or mistranscription, of Lamb's 'cannot co-exist with mirth.' The word is correctly given when Hazlitt quotes the passage in *Characters of Shakespear's Plays*, vol. IV. p. 194.

III. ON MARSTON, CHAPMAN, ETC.

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223. '*No mean men.*' Cf. *Acts*, XXI. 29.
'*Blown stifling back.*' *Paradise Lost*, XI. 313.

224. *Monsieur Kinsayder.* This was the *nom-de-plume* under which John Marston published his *Scourge of Villanie*, 1598.
Oh ancient Knights. Sir John Harington's translation of *Orlando Furioso* was published in 1591.
Antonio and Mellida. 1602.

225. *Half a page of Italian rhymes.* Part I. Act IV. Cf. Lamb's *Specimens.*
Each man takes hence life. Part I. Act III.
What you Will. 1607.
That fine invective. Act II. Scene I. Cf. Lamb's *Specimens.*

226. *Parasitaster and Malcontent. Parasitaster; or The Fawn*, 1606. *The Malcontent*, 1604.
Insinuates the plot. Cf. Buckingham, *The Rehearsal*, Act I. Scene 2.
'*Is nothing, if not critical.*' Cf. *Othello*, II. I. 120.
We would be private. The Fawn, Act II. Scene I.
Faunus, this Granuffo. Act III.

227. *Though he was no duke.* Act II. Scene I.
Molière has built a play. L'École des Maris.

228. *Full of wise saws. As You Like It*, Act II. 7. 156.
Nymphadoro's reasons. The Fawn, Act III.
Hercules's description. Act II. Scene I.
'*Like a wild goose fly,*' etc. *As You Like It*, II. 7. 86.

230. *Bussy d'Ambois.* 1607.
'*The way of women's will is hard to hit.*'

> 'It is not virtue, wisdom, valour, wit,
> Strength, comeliness of shape, or amplest merit,
> That woman's love can win, or long inherit,
> But what it is hard is to say,
> Harder to hit. . . .'
>
> *Samson Agonistes*, 1010 *et seq.*

'*Hide nothing from his view.*' 'Say first, for Heav'n hides nothing from thy view . . .' *Paradise Lost*, I. 27.

231. *Fulke Greville.* Lord Brooke (1554–1628). *Alaham* and *Mustapha* were published in the folio edition, 1633. See the essay 'Of Persons One Would Wish to Have Seen.'
The ghost of one of the old kings. Alaham.
Monsieur D'Olive. 1606.
Sparkish. In Wycherley's *Country Wife* (1675).
Witwoud and Petulant. In Congreve's *The Way of the World* (1700).

234. *May-Day.* 1611.
All Fools. 1605.
The Widow's Tears. 1612.
Eastward Hoe. 1605.
On his release from prison. Hazlitt is quoting Drummond's *Conversations*, XIII.
'*Express ye* [thee] *unblam'd.*' *Paradise Lost*, III. 3.
Appius and Virginia. Printed 1654.
The affecting speech. That of Virginius to Virginia, Act IV. Scene I, given in Lamb's *Specimens.*
Wonder of a Kingdom. Published 1636

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234. *Jacomo Gentili.* In the above play. •

Old Fortunatus. 1600.

235. *Vittoria Corombona. The White Devil,* 1612.

Signior Orlando Friscobaldo. In *The Honest Whore,* Part II., 1630. Cf. the *Plain Speaker* essay, 'Whether Genius is Conscious of its Powers.'

'*The red-leaved tables,' etc.* 'Within the red-leaved table of my heart,' a favourite Hazlitt quotation, from Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness,* Act II. Scene 3, *ante,* p. 212.

'*The pangs, the internal pangs,' etc. The Excursion,* VI. 554, from memory.

The Honest Whore. In two Parts, 1604 and 1630.

Signior Friscobaldo. The Second Part, Act I. Scene 2.

237. *You'll forgive me.* The Second Part, Act II. Scene 1.

It is my father. The Second Part, Act IV. Scene 1.

'*Oh! who can paint a sunbeam,' etc.*

238. '*Tough senior.' Love's Labour's Lost,* I. 2. 10.

'*And she has felt them knowingly.'* Cf. *Cymbeline,* III. 3. 46.

I cannot. The Honest Whore, Second Part, Act IV. Scene 1.

239. *The manner too.* The Second Part, Act III. Scene 1.

I'm well. The First Part, Act I. Scene 3. 'Deadst' appears to be a misprint for 'midst.'

'*Turns them into commodities.'* 2 *Henry IV.,* I. 2.

Patient Grizzel. Griselda in Chaucer's *Clerke's Tale.* Dekker collaborated in a play entitled *The Pleasant Comedy of Patient Grissill* (1603).

The high-flying. The Honest Whore, Second Part, Act II. Scene 1, etc.

240. *White Devil.* 1612.

Duchess of Malfy. 1623.

'*By which they lose some colour.'* Cf. *Othello,* I. 1. 73.

241. '*All fire and air.'* Cf. 'All air and fire,' Drayton, *Elegy to Henry Reynolds,* and 'I am fire and air,' *Antony and Cleopatra,* V. 2. 292.

'*Like the female dove,' etc.* Cf. *Hamlet,* V. 1. 309–10.

The Trial scene and the two following quotations, *The White Devil.* Act III. Scene 1.

243. *Your hand I'll kiss.* Act II. Scene 1.

The lamentations of Cornelia. Act V. Scene 2.

The parting scene of Brachiano. Act V. Scene 3.

245. *The scenes of the madhouse.* Act IV. Scene 2.

The interview. Act IV. Scene 1.

I prythee, and the three following quotations and note on p. 246. *The Duchess of Malfy,* Act IV. Scene 2.

246. *The Revenger's Tragedy.* 1607.

'*The dazzling fence,' etc.* Cf.

> 'Gay rhetorick
> That hath so well been taught her dazling fence.'
> *Comus,* 790–91.

The appeals of Castiza. Act II. Scene 1, and Act IV. Scene 4.

247. *Mrs. Siddons has left the stage.* Mrs. Siddons finally left the stage in June 1819. See *A View of the English Stage.*

On Salisbury-plain, where I write this. At Winterslow Hut.

'*Stern good-night.'* Cf. *Macbeth,* Act II. 2. 4.

'*Take mine ease at mine inn.'* 1 *Henry IV.* III. 3. 93.

Cibber's manager's coat. Colley Cibber (1671–1757), actor, dramatist, and manager. See the *Apology for his Life* (1740).

'*Books, dreams,' etc.* Wordsworth, *Personal Talk.* The quotation, as usual, is made from memory.

IV. ON BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER, ETC.

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249. '*Misuse the bounteous Pan.*' Cf.

> 'In wanton dance they praise the bounteous Pan,
> And thank the gods amiss.'
>
> *Comus*, 176–7.

'*Like eagles newly baited.*' Cf. 'Baited like eagles having lately bathed.' 1 *King Henry IV.*, IV. 1. 98–99.

250. '*Cast the diseases of the mind*,' *etc.* Cf.

> 'Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased . . . cast
> The water of my land, find her disease,
> And purge it to a sound and pristine health?'
>
> *Macbeth*, v. 3 40–42.

'*Wonder-wounded.*' *Hamlet*, v. 1. 280.

Wanton poets. Cf. Marlowe's *Edward II.*, Act I. Scene 1, and Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Maid's Tragedy*, Act II. Scene 2.

251. *The Maid's Tragedy.* Acted 1609–10, printed 1619.

252. *Do not mock me.* Act IV. Scene 1.

King and No King. Licensed 1611, printed 1619.

When he meets with Panthea. Act III. Scene 1.

253. *The False One.* 1619.

Youth that opens. Act III. Scene 2.

Like some celestial sweetness. Act II. Scene 3.

'*Tis here*, and the next quotation. Act II. Scene 1.

254. *The Faithful Shepherdess.* Acted 1610.

'*A perpetual feast*,' *etc.* *Comus*, 479–80.

He takes most ease. *The Faithful Shepherdess*, Act v. Scene 3.

'*Her virgin fancies wild.*' *Paradise Lost*, v. 296–7.

Here be woods. *The Faithful Shepherdess*, Act I. Scene 3.

255. *For her dear sake.* Act v. Scene 3.

Brightest. Act IV. Scene 2.

If you yield. Act II. Scene 2.

256. *And all my fears.* Act I. Scene 1.

Sad Shepherd. 1637.

257. *Tumbled him* [He tumbled] *down*, and the two following quotations. *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, Act I. Scene 1.

We have been soldiers. Act I. Scene 3.

258. '*Tearing our pleasures*,' *etc.* *To his Coy Mistress*, 43.

'*Born only heir to all humanity.*' Unidentified.

Repetitions of Shakespear's phraseology. Cf. (1) 'Mad and fantastic execution, *Troilus and Cressida*, v. 5. 38; (2) 'The wine of life is drawn,' etc., *Macbeth*, II. 3. 100; (3) 'That old common arbitrator, Time, will one day end it,' *Troilus and Cressida*, IV. 5. 225; (4) 'Bastards and syllables of no allowance,' *Coriolanus*, III. 2. 56.

How do you. *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, Act II. Scene 2.

261. '*Sing their bondage freely.*' Cf. *Cymbeline*, III. 3. 44.

The Bloody Brother, 1624; *A Wife for a Month*, 1623; *Bonduca*, acted *c.* 1619; *Thierry and Theodoret*, 1621; *The Night Walker*, 1625; *The Little French Lawyer*, *c.* 1618; *Monsieur Thomas*, *c.* 1619; *The Chances*, *c.* 1620; *The Wild Goose Chase*, acted 1621; *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife*, 1624.

262. *Philaster.* Acted *c.* 1608.

Sitting in my window. Act v. Scene 5.

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262. *'Into a lower world,' etc.* Cf. *Paradise Lost*, XI. 283–5.

His plays were works. The reference is to Suckling's *A Session of the Poets*, stanza 5:

> 'And he told them plainly he deserv'd the bays,
> For his were called works, where others were but plays.

Note. *'Tis not a life. Philaster*, Act v. Scene 2.

263. *'Miraturque novas,' etc.* Virgil, *Georgics*, II. 82.

The New Inn. Acted 1630.

The Fall of Sejanus. Acted 1603.

Two of Sejanus' bloodhounds. Act III. Scene 1.

To be a spy. Act IV. Scene 3.

264. *What are thy arts.* Act IV. Scene 5.

If this man. Act I. Scene 2.

265. *The conversations between Livia and Eudemus.* Act II. Scene 1.

Catiline's Conspiracy. Acted 1611.

David's canvas. Jacques Louis David (1748–1825), French historical painter.

The description of Echo. Act I. Scene I. *Cynthia's Revels* was acted in 1600 and printed the year after.

The fine comparison . . . the New Inn. Cf. Act III. 2.

Massinger and Ford. Philip Massinger (1583–1640) and John Ford (1586–?1656).

'Musical as is Apollo's lute.' Comus, 478.

266. *'Reason panders will.' Hamlet*, III. 4. 88.

'The true pathos and sublime of human life.' Burns, *Epistle to Dr. Blacklock.*

That is not the way.

The Unnatural Combat, 1639; *The Picture*, licensed 1629; *The Duke of Milan*, 1623; *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*, 1633; *The Bondman*, 1624; *The Virgin Martyr*, 1622.

267. *'Felt a stain like a wound.'* Burke, *Reflections on the French Revolution* (ed. Payne, p. 89).

Note. *In another publication.* Hazlitt is reproducing his introduction to the play in Oxberry's *New English Drama* (1818). See vol. IX. of the present edition.

268. *Rowe's Fair Penitent.* 1703. Nicholas Rowe (1673–1718).

From whose judgment I dissent. Lamb's, of course. See *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets.*

Fatal Dowry. 1632.

'Tis Pity She's a Whore. 1633.

269. *Annabella and her husband.* Act IV. Scene 3.

The Broken Heart. 1633.

Others may think it sublime. Lamb gives it complete and comments: 'I do not know where to find in any play a catastrophe so grand, so solemn, and so surprising as this.' (*Miscellaneous Prose*, ed. Lucas, 1912, p. 57).

270. *Miss Baillie.* See vol. v., p. 147 and note thereto.

Perkin Warbeck. 1634.

The Lover's Melancholy. 1628.

Love's Sacrifice. 1633.

Note. *Soft peace.* Act IV. Scene 4.

The concluding one. Act v. Scenes 2 and 3.

272. *Already alluded to. Ante*, p. 230.

273. *Mr. Lamb in his impressive eulogy.* See note to p. 269, above.

274. *Armida's enchanted palace.* In Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered.*

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274. '*Fairy elves,' etc.* Cf. *Paradise Lost*, I. 781 *et seq.*
'*Deaf the praised ear,' etc.* Pope, *Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady*, 76.
'*Informed with music, sentiment, and thought,' etc.* Unidentified.

V. ON SINGLE PLAYS, POEMS, ETC.

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274. *The Four P's.* ? 1530–3.
John Heywood. (*c.* 1497–*c.* 1575).
275. '*With the malice of a friend.*' Cf. vol. v. p. 177.
276. '*False knaves.*' *Much Ado About Nothing*, IV. 2. 24.
277. *What was sport to her.* Cf. vol. IV. p. 216 and note.
Like the false Duessa's. *The Faerie Queene*, Book I., Canto viii.
Count Fathom. Chap. XXI.
Friar John. Rabelais' *Gargantua*, I. 27.
Friar Onion. See Boccaccio, *Decameron*, Sixth Day, Novel x.
279. '*Which I was born to introduce,' etc.* *On the death of Dr. Swift.*
'*As a liar of the first magnitude.*' Congreve, *Love for Love*, Act II. Scene 5.
280. '*Mighty stream of Tendency,' etc.* *Excursion*, IX. 87.
'*Full of wise saws,' etc.* *As You Like It*, II. 7. 156.
The Return from Parnassus. 1606.
Like the Edinburgh Review in the year 1755. Two numbers were published, which were reprinted 1818.
'*That, like a trumpet,' etc.*

'. . . A bright romance
That like a trumpet made young pulses dance.'
Leigh Hunt, *Story of Rimini*, iii. 536.

Read the names. *The Return from Parnassus*, Act I. Scene 2.
282. *Kempe the actor.* William Kempe, fl. *c.* 1600.
Burbage. Richard Burbage (*c.* 1567–1618).
Few (of the University). Act IV. Scene 3.
283. '*Felt them knowingly.*' *Cymbeline*, III. 3. 46.
Philomusus and Studioso. Act II. Scene 1, Act III. Scene 5.
284. '*Out of our proof we speak,*' Cf. *Cymbeline*, III. 3. 27.
'*Made desperate,' etc.* *The Excursion*, VI. 532–3, quoted from Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Dying*, Chap. I. § v.
A mere scholar. *Return from Parnassus*, Act II. Scene 6.
The examination of Signor Immerito. Act III. Scene 1.
Note. *Sonnet to Cambridge.* Quoted by Hazlitt from *The Examiner* of August 29, 1819.
286. *Gammer Gurton's Needle.* Printed 1575. John Still (1543–1607), afterwards Bishop of Bath and Wells, is supposed to be its author.
287. *Gog's crosse*, and the following quotations. Act I. Scene 5.
289. *The person who refused to read some old books.* Lamb's friend, Randal Norris, sub-treasurer of the Inner Temple, presumably: 'Having tried to puzzle out the text of a Black lettered Chaucer . . . "Charley," said he, "I do not know what you find in these very old books, but I observe there is a deal of very indifferent spelling in them."' 'A Death-Bed' (1827) (*Elia*, ed. Lucas, 1912, p. 280).
289. *The Yorkshire Tragedy.* 1604 (attributed to Shakespeare); *Sir John Oldcastle*, 1600, (? by Munday and Drayton); *The Widow of Watling Street*, [*The Puritan, or the Widow, etc.*], 1607 (? by Wentworth Smith).

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289. *I have given a general account of them in another work.* See *Characters of Shakespear's Plays*, vol. IV. pp. 353–57.

Green's Tu Quoque, by George Cook. Greene's 'Tu Quoque,' 1614, by Joseph Cooke (fl. *c.* 1600). Hazlitt is following Lamb's *Specimens.*

290. *We find here the first mention.* See *ante*, p. 270; and cf. Hazlitt's reference to his own style of headgear in 'A Farewell to Essay-Writing.'

Microcosmus, by Thomas Nabbes. 1637.

291. *What do I see?* Act IV.

292. *Antony Brewer's Lingua.* 1607. This play is now said to be by John Tomkins, Scholar of Trinity, Cambridge (1594–8).

Mr. Lamb has quoted two passages. Specimens, ed. Lucas, 1903, p. 41.

Why, good father. Act II. Scene 4.

293. *Thou, boy.* Act II. Scene 1.

The Merry Devil of Edmonton. 1608. The author is unknown.

'Sound silver sweet,' etc. Cf. *Romeo and Juliet*, II. 2. 166.

Boniface. In Farquhar's *The Beaux' Stratagem.*

The deer-stealing scenes. The Merry Devil of Edmonton, Act V. Scene 1, etc.

294. *'Very honest knaveries.'* Cf. *Merry Wives of Windsor*, IV. 4. 81.

The way lies right. The Merry Devil of Edmonton, Act IV. Scene 1.

The Pinner of Wakefield. By Robert Greene (1560–1592).

Jeronymo. 1588. *The Spanish Tragedy* (?1583–5), licensed and performed 1592. Thomas Kyd, baptised November 6, 1558, died before 1601.

Idly said to have been added. Cf. Lamb's note: 'A late discovery at Dulwich College has ascertained that two sundry payments were made to Ben Jonson by the Theatre for furnishing additions to Hieronimo. See last edition of Shakspeare by Reed. There is nothing in the undoubted plays of Jonson which would authorise us to suppose that he could have supplied the scenes in question. I should suspect the agency of some "more potent spirit." Webster might have furnished them.' (*Specimens*, ed. Lucas, 1903, p. 10.) Shakespeare has also been suggested. See Appendix III. of vol. IV. of Professor F. L. Lucas's *Works* of Webster (1927).

'Which have all the melancholy madness,' etc. 'These are the gloomy companions of a disturbed imagination; the melancholy madness of poetry, without the inspiration.' *Junius*, Letter VII., quoted elsewhere by Hazlitt.

VI. ON MISCELLANEOUS POEMS, ETC.

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295. *The False One.* 1619.

Valentinian. Produced before 1619. 'Now the lusty spring is seen,' Act II. Scene 5.

The Nice Valour, or Passionate Madman. Published 1647.

'Most musical,' etc. Il Penseroso, 62.

296. *'The silver foam,' etc.*

> 'Her silver globes, light as the foamy surf
> That the wind severs from the broken wave.'
> Cowper, *Winter's Walk at Noon*, 155–6.

'Grim-visaged, comfortless despair.' A composite quotation: 'Grim visag'd war' is *Richard III.*, I. 1. 9; and 'Grim and comfortless despair' *Comedy of Errors*, V. 1. 80.

Beaumont died. At the age of thirty-two (1584–1616).

'Tis not a life. Philaster, Act V. Scene 2. Cf. *ante*, p. 262.

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296. '*The lily on its stalk green.*' 'The lilie upon his stalke grene.' Chaucer, *The Knighte's Tale*, 1036.
'*Lapt in Elysium.*' *Comus*, 257.

297. *Raphael died.* At the age of thirty-seven (1483–1520).
'*Now that his task,' etc.* *Comus*, 1012.
Rymer's abuse. See Thomas Rymer's (1641–1713) *The Tragedies of the Last Age Considered* (1678).
'*The sons of memory,' etc.* 'Dear son of memory, great heir of Fame.' Milton's *Sonnet on Shakespeare*, 1630.
Sir John Beaumont (1582–1628), the author of *Bosworth Field.*
'*Fleeted the time carelessly . . . in the golden age.*' Cf. *As You Like It*, I. I. 124.

298. *Walton's Complete Angler.* Third Day, chap. iv.
Note. Rochester's *Epigram.* Sternhold and Hopkins were the joint-authors of the greater number of the metrical versions of the Psalms (1547–62), which used to form part of the *Book of Common Prayer.*

299. *Drummond of Hawthornden.* William Drummond (1585–1649). His *Conversations with Ben Jonson* were written of a visit paid him by Jonson in 1618.

300. Note. '*I was all ear.*' *Comus*, 560.

301. *Glassy essence.* Unacknowledged from *Measure for Measure*, II. 2. 120.
'*The fly that sips treacle,' etc.* Gay's *Beggar's Opera*, Act II. Scene 2.
'*Sugar'd sonnetting.*' *The Return from Parnassus.* Act I. Scene 2. (*ante*, p. 281).

302. '*The gentle craft.*' The sub-title of a play of Dekker's: *The Shoemaker's Holiday, or the Gentle Craft* (1600).
'*A Phœnix gazed by all.*' *Paradise Lost*, v. 272.
'*Give a reason for the faith that was in me.*' Cf. 1 *Peter*, iii. 15.

303. '*The laborious foolery.*'
For what I have said, more than once. Principally, in his preceding course of lectures, on the *Comic Writers* (*ante*, pp. 38–48).
Oh, how despised. Act I. Scene I.

304. *The Triumph of his Mistress.* *The Triumph of Charis.*
'*Nest of spicery.*' *Richard III.*, IV. 4. 424.

306. *A celebrated line.* See Coleridge's *Osorio*, iv., I. I. written 1797, but not published in its original form until 1873. (*Poetical Works*, ed. Dykes Campbell, p. 498.) Recast and entitled *Remorse*, the tragedy was performed at Drury Lane, Jan. 23, 1813, and published in pamphlet form. In the Preface Coleridge relates the story of Sheridan reading the play to a large company, and turning it into ridicule by saying—

'Drip! drip! drip! there's nothing here but dripping.'

Oh, I could still. *Cynthia's Revels*, Act I. Scene I.

307. '*The milk of human kindness.*' *Macbeth*, I. 5. 18.

309. *Daniel.* Samuel Daniel, 1562–1619.

311. *Michael Drayton* (1563–1631). His *Polyolbion*, in thirty books, was issued in 1612–22.
P. Fletcher's Purple Island. Phineas Fletcher (1582–1650). *The Purple Island*, 1633.
Brown. William Browne (1591–*c.* 1643). *Britannia's Pastorals*, 1613–16.
Carew. Thomas Carew (*c.* 1594–*c.* 1639).
Herrick. Robert Herrick (1591–1674).
Crashaw. Richard Crashaw (?1612–1649).

312. *He is in a manner a modern discovery.* Herrick was practically forgotten until John Nichols (1745–1826) in 1796–7 drew attention to his poetry in *The Gentleman's Magazine.* A complete edition was published in 1823.

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312. *Marvell.* Andrew Marvell (1621–1678).
'Like the motes that play,' etc. 'The gay motes that people the sunbeams.' *Il Penseroso*, 8.
313. *On another occasion.* See *Lectures on the English Poets*, vol. v. p. 83.
315. *Clamour grew dumb.* *Pastorals*, Book II. Song 1.
The squirrel. Book I. Song 5.
The hues of the rainbow. Book II. Song 3.
The Shepherd's Pipe, 1614.
The Inner Temple Mask, 1620.
Marino. Giambattista Marini (1569–1625).
316. *His form had not yet lost.* *Paradise Lost*, I. 591–4.
318. *Ford's Version.* See Act I. Scene I.
Sir Philip Sydney (1554–86).
As Mr. Burke said. A paraphrase, apparently, rather than a quotation.
The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia. Published in 1690.
The epigrammatist. Thomas Brown (1663–1704).
'On compulsion.' 1 *Henry IV.*, II. 4. 463.
'The soldier's,' etc. *Hamlet*, III. 1. 159.
'Like a gate of steel,' etc. Cf. *Troilus and Cressida*, III. 3. 121.
320. *Horresco referens.* Virgil, *Æneid*, II. 204.
Walter Scott's novels. See *ante*, note to p. 130.
'With centric and eccentric,' etc. *Paradise Lost*, VIII. 83.
Circumambages. This word is Richardson's—'All the pretty circumambages customary on these occasions.' (*Sir Charles Grandison.*)
321. *So that the third day.* Book I. chap. ii.
Four Seasons of Life by Giorgioni. See 'The Marquis of Stafford's Gallery' in *Sketches of the Principal Picture Galleries* (vol. x.).
322. *'Like two grains of wheat,' etc.* Cf. *The Merchant of Venice*, I. I. 115.
Some lines from Ben Jonson. *Ante*, p. 304.
323. *As Mr. Burke said.* 'To be honoured and even privileged by the laws, opinions and inveterate usages of our country, growing out of the prejudice of ages, has nothing to provoke horror and indignation in any man.' *Reflections on the French Revolution* (ed. Payne, p. 163).
'Want of store,' etc. *Arcadia*, passage quoted (p. 321).
The shipwreck of Pyrochles. Book I. chap. i.
324. *Certainly, as her eyelids.* Book I. chap. i.
Adriano de Armada, in Love's Labour Lost. Don Adriano de Armado writes two letters, Act I. Scene I, and Act IV. Scene I.
325. *'The reason of their unreasonableness.'* *Don Quixote*, Act I. Scene I.
Pamelas and Philocleas. Heroines of the *Arcadia.*
326. *Defence of Poetry.* *An Apologie for Poetry*, 1595.

VII. CHARACTER OF LORD BACON'S WORKS, ETC.

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326. *Lord Bacon has been called.*

> 'Think how Bacon shined,
> The wisest, brightest, meanest of mankind.'
>
> Pope, *Essay on Man*, Epis. iv. 282.

'As in a map,' etc. Cowper, *The Task*, vi. 17.
327. *'Large discourse of reason,' etc.* *Hamlet*, IV. 4. 36.
Ascends the brightest heaven, etc. Unacknowledged from *Henry V.*, Prologue, 2.

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328. *I am well assured.* Dedication to First Book.

329. *Neither can the experience.* Book I. chap. ii. § 3.
The corrupter sort of mere politiques. Book I. chap. iii. § 6.
In our author's phrase. *Ibid.*
His character of the school-men. Book I. chap. iv. § 5.

330. *Notwithstanding, certain it is.* Book I. chap. iv. § 7.
This vice therefore. Book I. chap. iv. § 8.

331. *The first of these.* Book I. chap. v. §§ 1, 2, 8 and 9.

332. *Lord Bacon declares.* Book I. chap. v. § 12.
But the commandment of knowledge. Book I. chap. viii, §§ 3 and 6.

333. *Sir Thomas Brown.* Sir Thomas Browne (1605–1682).
'*The bosoms and businesses of men.*' Bacon, Dedication to *Essays.*
'*Find no end,' etc.* *Paradise Lost*, II. 561.
He cried out for an oh altitudo. 'I love to lose myself in a mystery, to pursue my reason to an O altitudo!' *Religio Medici*, Part I. § 9.
The great Platonic year. *Timaeus*, xxxviii.

334. '*All this world were one glorious lie.*' Unidentified.
'*Differences himself by.*' 'But (to difference my self nearer, and draw into a lesser Circle).' *Religio Medici*, Part I. § 5.
'*He could be content if the species were continued like trees.*' Part II. § 9.
Nabbes's Mask of Microcosmus. See *ante*, pp. 290–91.

335. '*Walks gowned.*' Lamb's *Sonnet*, *ante*, p. 284.
As it has been said. Cf. the passage quoted (p. 340) from Coleridge.

339. *Said to be written in a blank leaf of his works by Mr. Coleridge.* Said, that is, by a contributor signing himself 'G. J.' who printed the passage in *Blackwood's Magazine* for November 1819, from which source Hazlitt is quoting it. The quotation from *The Garden of Cyrus* (see footnote next page) is given in the magazine as Hazlitt gives it; in the passage as printed in Coleridge's *Literary Remains* (1836, II. 412) 'Arabia' is corrected to 'America.'

340. Note. *Sir Thomas Brown has it.* *The Garden of Cyrus.*
'*One of no mark or likelihood.*' Cf. 1 *Henry IV.*, III. 2. 45.
'*Without form and void.*' *Genesis*, I. 2.
'*De apparentibus,' etc.* Unidentified.
He saw nature in the elements of its chaos. Cf. *Religio Medici*, Part I. § 16.

341. '*Stuff of the conscience.*' *Othello*, I. 2. 2.
'*To give us pause.*' *Hamlet*, III. 1. 68.
'*Cloys with sameness.*' Cf. 'Cloy thy lips with loathed satiety.' *Venus and Adonis*, XIX.

342. '*Where pure Niemi's faery banks* [mountains],' *etc.* Thomson's *Winter*, 875–6.
'*Rains sacrificial roses.*' *Timon of Athens*, I. 1. 81.
Some are called at age. Chap. i. § 3.

343. *It is the same.* Chap. iii. § 7.
I have read, and the next two quotations. Chap. i. § 2.

VIII. ON THE SPIRIT OF ANCIENT AND MODERN LITERATURE, ETC.

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345. *The Apostate and Evadne.* *The Apostate* (1817) by Richard Lalor Sheil (1791–1851), *Evadne* (1819).
The Traitor. James Shirley's (1596–1666) *The Traitor* (1637).

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345. *'The last of those fair clouds,' etc.*

> 'To linger 'mid the last of those bright clouds
> That, on the steady breeze of honour, sailed
> In long procession calm and beautiful.'
>
> *Excursion*, vii. 1014–16.

Mr. Tobin. John Tobin (1770–1804). The *Honey-Moon.*

Has been pronounced by a polite critic. Cf. *Characters of Shakespear's Plays*, vol. IV. p. 344.

The Curfew. Tobin's play, 1807.

346. *Mr. Lamb's 'John Woodvil.'* Published 1802.

'There where we have treasured,' etc. Cf. *S. Matthew*, vi. 21.

'The tall deer,' etc.

> 'Yon tall and elegant stag
> Who paints a dancing shadow of his horns
> In the water, where he drinks.'
>
> *John Woodvil*, II. ii. 195–7.

'But fools rush in,' etc. Pope, *Essay on Criticism*, III. 66.

To say that he has written better. Hazlitt's praise of Lamb is generous and persistent, and it is never more in evidence than in this course of lectures. Cf. vol. IV. pp. 31 and 270 and notes, and *ante*, p. 138.

A gentleman of the name of Cornwall. Bryan Waller Procter (Barry Cornwall, 1787–1874), whose *Dramatic Scenes* were published in 1819. See introductory note.

348. *Some observations on this subject.* The 'observations' are, of course, Hazlitt's own, from his article 'Schlegel on the Drama' in *The Edinburgh Review* for February 1816. See vol. XVI of the present edition, and notes.

355. *'See o'er the stage,' etc.* Thomson, *Winter*, 646–8.

The Orphan, etc. By Otway, 1680.

'Arabian trees,' etc. *Othello*, v. 2. 350.

'That sacred pity,' etc. *As You Like It*, II. 7. 123.

Miss O'Neill. Eliza O'Neill (1791–1872). See *A View of the English Stage.*

356. *Hog hath lost his Pearl.* 1613.

Addison's Cato. 1713.

Dennis's Criticism. John Dennis's (1657–1734) *Remarks on Cato*, 1713.

Don Sebastian. 1690.

The mask of Arthur and Emmeline. *King Arthur, or the British Worthy*, 1691, a Dramatic Opera with music by Purcell.

357. *Alexander the Great.* That is, *The Rival Queens* (1677), by Nathaniel Lee (1655–92).

Œdipus. 1679.

'Relieve the killing languor,' etc. Burke, *Reflections on the French Revolution* (ed. Payne, p. 120).

Leave then the luggage, and the two following quotations. *Don Sebastian*, Act II. Scene I.

359. *The Smiths.* Edmund ('Rag') Smith (1672–1710), whose *Phædra and Hippolytus* had a prologue by Addison.

The Hughes. John Hughes (1677–1720) author of *The Siege of Damascus*, 1720, and one of the contributors to *The Spectator.*

The Hills. Aaron Hill (1684–1749), poet and dramatist.

The Murphys. Arthur Murphy (1727–1805) dramatist and biographer.

'Fine by degrees,' etc. Prior, *Henry and Emma*, 430.

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359. *Southern.* Thomas Southerne (1660/1–1746), who wrote *Oroonoko, or the Royal Slave* (1696).
Lillo. George Lillo (1693–1739), *Fatal Curiosity*, 1737.
Moore. Edward Moore (1712–1757), *The Gamester*, 1753.
Gray, in one of his Letters. Letter dated September, 1737.
'*Sent us weeping,' etc.* Cf. *Richard II.*, v. 1. 45.
'*Rise sadder,' etc.* Coleridge, *Ancient Mariner.*
Douglas. A tragedy (1756) by John Home (1724–1808). For a more extended criticism by Hazlitt see his introduction to the play in Oxberry's *New English Drama*, in vol. IX. of the present edition.

360. '*Decorum is the principal thing.*' See *ante*, note to p. 43.
Aristotle's definition of tragedy. In the *Poetics.*
A pleasure in madness, etc. Cf. vol. IV., note to p. 76.
Lovers' Vows. Mrs. Inchbald's adaptation from Kotzebue, 1800.
Pizarro. Sheridan's adaptation from Kotzebue's *The Spaniard in Peru*, 1799.
'*Shews the very age,' etc.* *Hamlet*, III. 2. 26.

361. *Orson.* In the fifteenth century romance, *Valentine and Orson.*
'*Pure in the last recesses of the mind.*' Dryden's translation from the Second Satire of *Persius*, 133.
'*Which shall be which.*' Cf. *Macbeth*, III. 4. 127.
'*There is some soul of goodness,' etc.* *Henry V.*, IV. 1. 4.
There's something rotten, etc. *Hamlet*, I. 4. 90.

362. *As we learn from the Sorrows of Werter.* Goethe's *Sorrows of Werther* was finished in 1774.
The Robbers. By Schiller, 1781.
There are impressions, etc. See vol. I. p. 91 and note.
The scene . . . in which the Moor. Act III. Scene 2.

363. *Don Carlos.* 1787.
His Wallenstein. Schiller's, 1799; Coleridge's, 1800.
Cumberland's imitation. Richard Cumberland's (1732–1811) *Wheel of Fortune* (1779), was founded on Kotzebue's *Menschenhass und Reue.* In 1798 the same play was translated (by Benjamin Thompson) under the title of *The Stranger.*
Goethe's tragedies. *Count Egmont*, 1788; *Stella*, 1776; *Iphigenia*, 1786.
Madame de Stael speaks. In her *De l'Allemagne*, 1813. Cf. Hazlitt's review of the book on its appearance in the later volume devoted to his journalism.
Memoirs of Anastasius the Greek. Thomas Hope's (1770–1831) Eastern romance was published in 1819 and was praised (by Sydney Smith) in the *Edinburgh Review.*
When in the fine summer evenings. *Werther* (ed. Bohn), p. 337.

364. '*As often got without merit,' etc.* *Othello*, II. 3. 270.